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ABSTRACT

In 2002, the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) collaborated with the Senior Service Association (SSA) and the American Society on Aging (ASA) on a two-phase project to improve the effectiveness of ASA's sub-grantees in serving linguistically and culturally diverse populations. SSA provides subsidized employment for low-income seniors and funds to sub-grantees to provide English instruction to English-as-a- Second-Language (ESL) seniors. One such program was at the Minneapolis, Minnesota, East Side Community Center, which worked with refugee seniors from Somalia. This report discusses the project's needs assessment and technical assistance phases. The needs assessment involved staff interviews, focus group interviews with Somali senior aides, ESL class observations, and presentations on adult ESL instruction. Technical assistance involved reviewing needs assessment findings and offering presentations at the Community Center for SSA sub-grantees serving senior aides who needed to improve their English. Recommendations are included for steps CAL could take to meet the needs of SSA sub-grantees working with linguistically diverse seniors. Eight appendixes, comprising the bulk of the report, include interview forms and responses, teacher question and observation forms, myths and realities about adult ESL learning, information on best practices in adult ESL teaching, and related conference presentations and teaching materials. (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education.) (SM)

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Final Report

Collaborative Project

on

Serving Linguistically Diverse Seniors

Submitted to Senior Service Association
September 27, 2002

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#4832

FL801555

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Introduction

From February – June 2002, the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) collaborated with the National Senior Citizen's Education and Research Center (NSCERC) (now called the Senior Service Association [SSA]) and the American Society on Aging (ASA) on a two-phase project to improve the effectiveness of ASA's sub-grantees in serving their linguistically and culturally diverse populations.

SSA is funded through the U.S. Department of Labor's Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) to provide subsidized employment for low-income seniors. In turn, SSA provides funds to sub-grantees to provide English instruction to seniors for whom English is not their native language. One such program was the East Side Community Center of Minneapolis, MN. At this site, more than 65 seniors were refugees from Somalia. East Side was concerned because after a year or more of classes, the seniors were not learning English.

Anthony Sarmiento, SSA director, approached CAL, suggesting that we work with East Side to improve their English language services to the Somali seniors. From this we could generalize to the other SSA sub-grantees who work with linguistically diverse seniors.

CAL's work in the project consisted of two phases, a needs assessment phase and a technical assistance phase. CAL staff working on the project were Miriam Burt, project director; Lynda Terrill, program associate; and MaryAnn Cunningham Florez, program associate.

This report discusses the two phases and makes recommendations for future steps CAL could make to meet the needs of SSA sub-grantees working with linguistically diverse seniors.

Phase One: Needs Assessment

Initial planning was carried out via conference calls CAL initiated with Valdes Snipes-Bennett, SSA; Greta Peters, Senior Aides Project Coordinator of the East Side Community Center in Minneapolis, MN; and Carmelita Tursi, ASA. Then, Miriam Burt and Lynda Terrill visited East Side and performed a needs assessment there on March 26 and 27.

<u>Task One</u>

The following staff at East Side were interviewed:

Greta Peters, Senior Aides Project Director,
James. S. Worlobah, Director of Senior Programs,

Jane Hanger Seeley, Director of Community/Family Programs,
Audrey A. Harris, Job Counselor, and
Ahmed Mohamed, Employment Specialist/Translator

CAL staff also conducted two focus groups with Somali senior aides.

The form we used for the East Side interviews and focus groups, along with a summary of the responses received, is attached as appendix A.

ESL Classes were observed at the Somali Community of Minnesota, Ubah, and Luxton Center. The observation form used, along with a summary of our observations, is attached as appendix B.

Finally, CAL staff gave a presentation for East Side staff on best practices in adult ESL instruction. The handouts given out are attached in appendix C.

Task Two

On April 17 and 18, Miriam Burt and MaryAnn Cunningham Florez attended SSA's annual conference, which was held in Jacksonville, Florida, at the Hilton Hotel, Jacksonville Landing.

At the conference, CAL staff, Carmelita Tursi of ASA, and Greta Peters of East Side gave a plenary presentation on working with linguistically diverse seniors. Burt and Florez discussed the characteristics and needs of adult English language learners in the United States, the differences between this population and native-English speaking adults, ways to work with these adults to facilitate success in their workplaces and communities, and how to plan ahead for increasing diversity in client populations.

With a smaller, self-selected group, CAL staff gave a presentation that expanded on the themes and topics of the general session. At this time, because of the small number of participants, CAL was able to get information from some sub-grantees about how they were providing instruction to seniors needing to learn English and what they saw as their needs to help them improve the services they offered these senior aides. Handouts from the conference presentations are attached as appendix D.

Following the Jacksonville Conference, CAL staff hosted a meeting with SSA and ASA to debrief on the needs assessment of Minneapolis and Jacksonville and to discuss next steps. This meeting was held at the CAL offices, on May 2. A summary of the meeting, written by Valdes Snipes-Bennett of SSA, is attached as appendix E.

At that meeting another task was added: a needs assessment trip to the Chinatown Project in New York City. On May 21 and May 22, MaryAnn

Cunningham Florez participated in that task, along with Carmelita Tursi of ASA and Valdes Snipes-Bennett and Jodie Fine of SSA. Florez interviewed the project coordinator, Jennifer Lo, as well as two teachers. Additionally, two classes were observed. The forms Florez used and the letter she sent Lo summarizing the consultancy are attached as appendix F.

Phase 2 – Technical Assistance: DC Meeting with SSA and ASA and Training in Minneapolis

Task One

On May 23, SSA, SSA, and CAL staff met in the CAL offices to plan the technical assistance phase of the collaborative project. Participants reviewed findings from the needs assessment phase. It was decided that CAL staff would return to Minneapolis to provide training in general assessment procedures for working with seniors learning English as well as training in the using the Basic English Skills Test (BEST) Oral Interview to determine learners' oral English skills.

The email sent to SSA sub-grantees informing them of the upcoming training is attached as appendix G.

Task Two

On June 13 and 14, Miriam Burt and Lynda Terrill returned to Minneapolis and gave presentations at East Side Community Center for SSA sub-grantees serving senior aides who needed to improve their English. In addition to 12 East Side staff there were participants from St. Paul, MN (Neighbor to Neighbor); Modesto, CA (The Center for Senior Employment); Eau Claire, WI (Literacy Volunteers of America); Wausau, WI (Aging and Disability Resource Center of Marathon County); and Miami Florida (Miami Beach Community Development Corporation). Other participants attending were Mohamed Ismail (Somali Community of Minnesota) and Noor Mohamed (Luxton Center).

The handouts from the training and a summary of the training, including participant evaluations, are attached as appendix H.

Summary of Findings

The following is a summary of the findings from the observations, interviews, and focus groups. Although the findings refer specifically to East Side's classes, the findings from the Chinatown Project (attached as appendix F) mirror those of the East Side project.

It should be noted first, however, that East Side's commitment to meeting the needs of linguistically and culturally diverse seniors was never in question. In

fact, Greta Peters has been working with the Somali Community to improve their English language services since we observed the class in March. The diversity of East Side staff, its history of serving those most in need, and the variety of services the center offers to neighborhood residents of all ages and ethnic groups all contribute to making East Side an excellent candidate for providing services to the Somali seniors. The dedication and effort of the staff, in particular that of the coordinator, Greta Peters is evident. Finally the elders themselves are clearly appreciative and value the services and opportunities Ms. Peters and East Side offers them. The following comments concern only the quality of the English language instructional services provided the seniors as was observed during out two-day visit.

1. All teaching observed was very teacher-centered; that is, all activity was directed from or to the teacher. Student-to-student interaction in English was not observed.

2. The training of teachers was questionable. In cases where the teachers reported had had training, as in Ubah, the level of instruction was higher, and learners were more engaged.

3. There was no need to speak English in the classes for any real communication. The classes generally consisted of Somali students being taught by a Somali teacher.

4. There was also little reason to speak English in the work placements, as most seniors worked in Somali-language environments.

5. There were inadequate resources: There were no textbooks, assessment activities, blackboards, or paper. Even enough space for the classes seemed to be lacking in the sites.

6. Most of the classes appeared to be mixed-level classes with some students at all levels of ability both for English language proficiency and for native language literacy.

7. In most cases there was no curriculum for the class.

8. In most cases there appeared to be no goals for the classes.

9. In most cases, no assessment was done for placement and to monitor learner progress. In Ubah, there was some pre-testing with BEST. However, no assessment was done to determine learner's needs and preferences for learning English. Staff where the seniors were placed for work were also not interviewed to determine what they felt seniors needed to be able to do and say in English. (Note: It could be argued that this would be moot, as seniors did not need to speak English in their work placements. However, in all organizations, there need

to be employees who can read and write and speak English as well as the native language. Furthermore, for most jobs, English language skills are generally key to job mobility and satisfaction.)

10.The materials used for the intake of the seniors did not take into account the difficulties Somali seniors might have reading the small print in the forms, especially if they were not literate in either Somali or English. Also not taken into consideration were poor eyesight and other physical problems connected to aging that would make it difficult for the seniors to read the small print even if the language were not an issue. See appendix I for sample forms used by East Side with the Somali seniors.

Next Steps

We plan to take the following steps:

1. CAL has proposed to the U.S. Department of Education, and it has been accepted, that the National Center for ESL Literacy Education (NCLE) a CAL project and adjunct ERIC clearinghouse that provides technical assistance to those who work with adults learning English will publish a manual for service providers working with linguistically diverse senior. NCLE staff include Miriam Burt and Lynda Terrill, the two prime workers on the completed SSA project described here. Burt and Terrill will work on the manual, addressing the following issues: needs, skills, and learner assessment; learner placement; space, materials, and resources needed; teacher selection and training; work placement; curriculum development; program development; and collaboration among partners. This plan was discussed this with Tony Sarmiento and received his approval on September 6.

2. In March 2003, Miriam Burt and Tony Sarmiento will present a draft of this publication to SSA's National Convention and seek the input of participants there.

3. CAL will collaborate with the Asociación Nacional Pro Personas Mayores, a SCSEP project that serves older workers whose first language is Spanish, Chinese, Somali, or another language. Possible collaboration includes having them review the manual in pre-publication stage and field test activities from the publication.

4. CAL will collaborate with AARP by utilizing Carmelita Tursi (formerly of ASA) as a draft reviewer of the document.

5. CAL will perform other activities as deemed important to help SSA sub grantees serving linguistically diverse seniors.

Budget

For tasks 1-4, CAL will support the costs of the manual development including staff time, payment to a graphics designer, attendance for one to the Chicago Convention, and publishing the first 250 copies. CAL will sell the book on its Web site. SSA and its partners and sub-grantees will pay for printing and distributing additional copies as needed to their constituencies.

For task 5, if deemed useful and appropriate, CAL will provide follow-up training for SSA sub-grantees, such as East Side, on assessment and other best practices for working with linguistically diverse seniors. If this work is to be performed, SSA will cover CAL staff time, travel, and expenses.

Appendix A: Interview and Focus Group Form

Name: _____

Place of Employment: _____

Date: _____

1. What is your job at _____?

2. Do you work with the Somali elders? How?

3. Do you have questions about working with the Somali elders? Have you had any concerns about them related to language and communication?

4. What language skills do you think they need to have to be successful on the job? (What do you wish the ESL programs would teach them?)

5. Do you have any questions for us?

Miriam Burt and Lynda Terrill
NSCERC Project
March 27, 28, 2002

East Side Interviews: March 27, 28.

Responses from East Side Staff Working with Somali Elders

Questions/concerns about working with elders:

Length of time it takes for Somali elders to learn English so they can be understood on the job. We have limited time to train them so they can be self-sufficient.

The Somalis aren't making adequate progress.

They also need more hours of ESL (more intensive and over a longer period of time).

The cultural issues overpower the English: They study English and work in a Somali language and cultural environment (all of the placements are with Somali-run organizations.

There are limited funds to provide good English language instruction for the seniors.

Skills the seniors need to have:

Computer skills

Reading and writing in English

Social language

Language for the job (mentioned several times)

They need to be able to communicate independently

Not sure, can you (CAL) tell us?

Responses from Somali Elder Focus Groups

Questions/issues learners themselves have:

They need opportunity to speak English with other language groups; they fall back on Somali because they are surrounded by Somali at work and on the job.

More time is needed to learn English than the 18 months they have.

Need to explore placing Somalis in established ESL programs in community that offer multi cultural multilingual classes.

More time practicing speaking is needed.

Skills they need to have

Computer

Speaking

Some of them need high English level: They do conflict resolution among themselves and sometimes among other language groups. These high level learners are interested in English to use in the community. As leaders, they need to move beyond just the Somali community and they need English for that.

Appendix B:

Questions and Observation Form For Teachers

Date_____ Time_____

Site_____

Class_____ Level_____

Teacher_____

Class description: Proficiency levels, class intensity and duration, open or closed entry, setting, number of learners, mandated (what agency?), access to computers/internet, volunteers, native language literacy

_____

_____

_____

_____

How do learners enter the program?

How are learners' skills and knowledge assessed at intake? To show progress? To exit program?

How and when are learners' needs and goals expressed and how do they inform classroom instruction?

What educational philosophies, curricula, materials, resources, and activities are used?

Observation:

Learner/teacher interactions	
Learner/learner interactions	
Activities	
Affective domain/cultural issues	

East Side Observations: March 27, 28.

Summary of Class Observations

Class observations were held at the Somali Community of Minnesota, Ubah, and Luxton Community Center.

The class structure and content varied widely by site.

Somali Community of Minnesota

The first class observed was at the Somali Community of Minnesota. The teacher was a native Somali male. There were 14 students seated around a long narrow table. The room was dimly lit, and not well swept. There was one blackboard at the front of the room. There were no books to be observed. The women sat on one side of the table, the men on another.

The teacher wrote a dialogue on the board (attached as appendix I) and gave out a handout of what was written on the board. There was no contextualization or continuity among the question and answer pairs. One of the questions was incorrectly written.

Virtually no interactions were observed between the teacher and students, Basically, the teacher was talking about grammar and English. He did no checking for comprehension with the students and there was no production of English required of the the students. The students seemed to become more engaged in the class when Greta Peters and Lynda and I arrived.

One student wanted word-for-word translation of "wh" questions from English to Somali. Other students were interested in that, but it was not clear how many could read and write in Somali. The class finished early because room was being used for something else. (This was not a dedicated classroom, even during class hours.) It clear that it was a mixed level class: some of the students were unable to write, others were asking questions that indicated they were beyond the level of the class.

Ubah

Ubah was housed in a downtown Minneapolis building. The whole building was dedicated to the adult ESL courses in the evening. There were about 15- 20 students in each class, except for the GED class, which included 4 students. The students were placed in class, according to their scores on the Basic English Skills Test (BEST) literacy and oral exams. There were 5 levels of instruction that went from a literacy section up to a GED level. The teacher in the GED class was a male, native English speaker, and the only non-Somali instructor. All instructors had some connections to the field of education; many were public school

teachers or teacher aides in the United States. Some had been teachers in Somalia.

Ubah's program intensive: Classes were held every evening. In addition to adult ESL instruction, the program offered homework assistance and tutoring for upper elementary and middle school students, during the adult classes. Other educational services included citizenship classes. There was a room that housed books donated from the Minnesota Department of Education and the Minnesota Literacy Council. The program served 140 adult students. The classrooms had rows of tables and there was a blackboard at the front of each class. We were told that most adult learners studied at least a year in the program there. The seniors were in classes with Somali adult students of all ages.

These classes appeared to be much more successful than the Somali Community Classes. This was probably due to that fact students were assessed and then placed by level. The teachers appeared to have had some training. They were checking for student's comprehension. While we observed no student-to-student interaction providing practice in English, there was interaction between teacher and students. The atmosphere at Ubah was very pleasant and students and teachers joked with one another in Somali. Women and men were both asking and answering questions and there were both men and women teachers.

Classroom materials consisted of photocopied pages from the commercial textbook *Side by Side I.* Like the class at the Somali Community Center, these classes appeared to be grammar focused, rather than focused on survival skills. For example, one class was studying and practicing personal pronouns, another was doing suffixes. The noise level was high because the classrooms had thin walls and were crowded. Whether or not this was distracting to the students was not clear. Somali was being used to translate at times, when it seemed appropriate.

Luxton Community Center

These classes were held in a community center near the University of Minnesota. When we arrived, the building was locked. Within a few minutes, the teacher, a female native English speaker, arrived to open the building. Then about 15 students arrived by charter bus. The classes were being held for the Somali elders who live in the subsidized housing complex near the center.

The 15 students were divided into two classes after it was decided that they were too many for one class. We observed the class with the 7 students who appeared to be lower level – There was no formal assessment done, on the students, we were told, however. The students seemed to be at different levels, however; all appear to have some literacy skills. There was a poster on setting goals in the

room. There was no bulletin board. The students had name cards in front of them.

The teacher appear to be continuing a lesson she had started the day before. The English language and interaction all flowed from teacher to student, with no student-to-student interaction. The teacher had the names and bibliographic information, on a higher-level grammar books, presumably in response to a student's question of the day before. All this information seemed to be for one, higher-level student who was engaged in the class more than the others.

In spite of the materials, plans, and attempts by the teacher to contextualize the learning, the students did not appear to be very interested in the lesson or in what the teacher was saying. The students, mostly women, talked to one another in Somali rather than responding to teacher's questions. They did not seem to be engaged in the fill-in-the-blank exercise , photocopied from a Heinle and Heinle text, that the teacher was leading them through. This could have been partly due to nervousness on the part of the teacher, or because we were there. It also could have been because the students saw the class as a time for socializing with their friends. We later learned the center functions as a cultural center for the Somali community: a place where festivals are held, children learn Somali customs, and so on, and so the concept of the class as a place for socializing is not surprising.

After observing the class we spoke with a Somali senior aide translator at the center. Her concern was the transportation issue (the bus had been late that morning) and the fact that she was continually having to accompany seniors to health care appointments because their English skills were so low.

Exercise #8

From somali community class

Q. Where is the girl Who took my bag?

Ans: She took it by mistake she is in the toilet.

Q. When Mr James and his wife Mary, worked for Charitie

Ans: They always work for the Community. Mary is Kind Perso

Q. How Can you reach St Paul?

Ans: Take Bus #5 at Lake S it will drop you downtow St Paul 16 City after 20 m

Appendix C: Adult English Language Learners: Myths and Realities

MARK THE FOLLOWING SENTENCES AS EITHER TRUE OR FALSE.

1. Most adult immigrants want to learn to speak English.

   t

2. Adult English language learners are too old to learn another language well.

   f

3. English language learners run the gamut from those who are not literate in their native language to those with post-graduate degrees from their home countries.

   t

4. It takes about a year for a foreign-born adult to really learn English.

   f

5. Other information, such as how to participate in your child's education and how to get, keep, and be successful on the job, can be taught along with language in the English as a second language (ESL) class.

   t

6. Good reading skills will automatically transfer from one language to another. A student who is a good reader in the native language will be a good reader in English.

   f

7. We learn only 20% of what we hear, but 80% of what we experience personally.

   t

8. The Somali script is based on the Arabic alphabet.

   f

Miriam Burt and Lynda Terrill 3/28/02
East Side Community Center, Minneapolis

NCLE

A Resource for ESL Practitioners

Are you looking for information about how to start an ESL program? Would you like suggestions on how to work with a multilevel class? Do you need speakers or consultants for on-site technical assistance? Do you have a question about the pros and cons of standardized tests versus alternative assessment? Have you considered contacting NCLE?

What is NCLE?

NCLE—pronounced like the five-cent coin—is the National Center for ESL Literacy Education, located at the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL), a nonprofit organization in Washington, DC. NCLE focuses on literacy education for adults and out-of-school youth learning English as a second language. Our mission is to provide practitioners and others with timely information on adult ESL literacy education.

How does NCLE help practitioners?

NCLE provides information and referral services on questions regarding literacy education for adults learning English. Contact us with questions about populations, programs, instructional approaches, and resources.

NCLE offers free publications:

- Digests and Q&As—two- and four-page articles on a variety of current topics in adult ESL, including teaching strategies, civics education, assessment, finding resources on the Web, and family literacy
- Annotated Bibliographies of resource materials from the ERIC database
- *NCLEnotes*—NCLE's semiannual newsletter reporting on ESL literacy news and resources

NCLE staff are available for professional development activities, such as teacher institutes, workshops, program evaluations, and conference sessions.

NCLE staff facilitate the National Institute for Literacy's electronic listserv, NIFL-ESL, for those interested in online discussions about the field of adult ESL instruction.

NCLE collects, evaluates, and abstracts documents about adult ESL literacy and native language literacy education for the ERIC database.

Is NCLE on the World Wide Web?

NCLE's Web site offers 74 full-text ERIC Digests and Q&As, resource collections, FAQs, how to join the NIFL-ESL listserv, information about NCLE publications, and more. Visit NCLE at **http://www.cal.org/ncle**.

How can I contact NCLE?

NCLE's address is 4646 40th Street NW, Washington, DC 20016-1859. We can also be contacted by e-mail: ncle@cal.org; phone: 202-362-0700, extension 200; fax: 202-363-7204; and via our Web site.

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Beginning to Work With Adult English Language Learners: Some Considerations

MaryAnn Cunningham Florez and Miriam Burt, National Center for ESL Literacy Education

In many parts of the United States, the number of nonnative adult learners seeking English language instruction is growing. States such as North Carolina, Arkansas, Georgia, Tennessee, Nebraska, and Iowa, not historically associated with immigrant influxes, have been experiencing increased growth rates with these populations in the last decade (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001). In 1998, 47% of the participants in federally funded adult education programs were there to learn English as a second language (ESL) (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, 1999). As immigrant populations seek English language instruction, the need for teachers to serve them is drawing people into the adult ESL teaching field. Some of these teachers have training and experience working with adults learning English. However, many are working with these learners for the first time.

What do teachers who are beginning to work with adult English language learners need to know? This Q&A discusses recommendations in four areas: application of principles of adult learning in ESL contexts, second language acquisition, culture and working with multicultural groups, and instructional approaches that support language development in adults. It is not intended to be comprehensive. Rather, it gives teachers an overview of important points, suggests basic strategies to use, and provides resources to consult for further information.

How do the principles of adult learning apply to adult English language learners?

Malcolm Knowles' (1973) principles of andragogy, the art and science of facilitating adult learning, are still seminal to many of today's theories about learning and instruction for adults.

> Adults are self-directed in their learning.
> Adults have reservoirs of experience that serve as resources as they learn.
> Adults are practical, problem-solving-oriented learners.
> Adults want their learning to be immediately applicable to their lives.
> Adults want to know why something needs to be learned.

In general, this picture of the practical, purposeful, self-directed learner is representative of adults, whether they are native or nonnative English speakers. All adult learners need adult-appropriate content, materials, and activities that speak to their needs and interests and allow them to demonstrate their knowledge and abilities.

So what is different for English language learners? Obviously, they need help with the language as they learn content. Teachers working with English language learners also need to think about how Knowles' adult learner characteristics are filtered through culture, language, and experience. For example, it is not uncommon to find nonnative learners who may be hesitant to take charge of their own learning. Their educational experiences in their countries may have taught them that the teacher is the unquestioned expert. They may be resistant to a learner-centered classroom where they are expected to develop goals and work in groups with other learners (Shank & Terrill, 1995).

Nonnative learners also may resist the lifeskill-oriented instruction that is common in many adult ESL programs. Coming from cultures where learning is a high-status, academic endeavor, they may expect a more academically oriented environment (Hardman, 1999). Because of this, teachers should explain to learners why they are learning what they are learning in this new way. Similarly, because many English language learners may have studied English grammar and are familiar with the terms describing language components, instructors should be prepared, when appropriate, to answer learners' questions about sentence structure and vocabulary.

What do instructors need to know about second language acquisition (SLA)?

Theories about how languages are learned can be complex. However, having some understanding of how people acquire and use languages can be useful to the teachers of adult English language learners.

Second language acquisition theories address cognitive issues (how the brain processes information in general and language in particular), affective issues (how emotions factor into second language processing and learning), and linguistic issues (how learners interact with and internalize

new language systems). The following are some suggestions that instructors can use in the classroom. They are drawn from theories of second language acquisition generally accepted as relevant for most second language learners (summarized from Brown, 2001; Krashen, 1981).

- ***Meaningful interaction and natural communication in the target language are necessary for successful language acquisition.***

  Learners need to *use* the language, not simply talk about it. Give learners opportunities and purposes for communication that reflect or relate to their lives (e.g., role-playing a doctor/patient exchange or creating a chart with information on local medical services). Use authentic materials in activities whenever possible (e.g., listening for details in a recorded telephone message or reading classified ads from the local newspaper).

- ***Effective language use involves an automatic processing of language.***

  To become proficient, learners need to move from a concentrated focus on grammar, forms, and structures to using language as a tool to accomplish communication tasks. Think about the purpose of each lesson (e.g., is it important that the learner produce a specific grammar point or communicate an idea?) and interject error correction to serve those purposes. For example, if the activity is an oral substitution drill practicing the correct use of irregular past tense forms, it is appropriate to correct the verb form being used. However, if the focus of the lesson is making small talk on the job—a communication that involves use of irregular past tense verbs—correction may simply consist of a repetition of the correct form by the teacher (e.g., "I go to a movie last Saturday" is corrected by, "Oh, you went to a movie. What movie did you see?").

- ***Language learners can monitor their speech for correctness when they have time to focus their attention on form and know the language rules involved.***

  Give learners sufficient time for activities, to communicate, and to monitor their performance. Integrate lessons on grammar, structures, and language rules that are relevant to the communication task at hand (e.g., present lessons on imperatives when discussing giving directions) so that learners become familiar with correct structures. Focus activity objectives so that learners are not asked to process and monitor too many points at one time (e.g., asking learners to use new vocabulary and correctly use present and present progressive verb forms in an unfamiliar dialogue format can be overwhelming).

- ***Second language acquisition occurs when learners are exposed to language that is at and slightly above their level of comprehension.***

  In the materials you use and in your own speech, expose learners to language that is both at and slightly above what they can comfortably understand. Offer a balance of easier reading and listening activities with more challenging ones. Provide pictures, gestures, and prompts when learners are asked to use more complex language.

- ***People have affective filters (created by a variety of factors such as motivation, self-confidence, or anxiety) that can support or disrupt acquisition of a second language.***

  Create a classroom environment in which learners feel comfortable using and taking risks with English. Use activities that ask learners to work together or share information to build a sense of familiarity and community. Make sure the physical environment is as comfortable as possible. Avoid constant error correction and include activities that focus on overall ability to communicate meaning. Recycle topics or activities that motivate learners.

- ***There are "interlanguage" periods during which learners make systematic errors that are a natural part of language learning.***

  These may be similar to those of a child learning a first language (e.g., adding *ed* to signify all past tense verbs) or similar to patterns in a learner's native language (e.g., Spanish speakers placing adjectives after nouns, such as *shirt blue*). If errors appear to be normal and developmental, provide feedback and modeling of correct structures to support learners as they move through these steps. If an error persists, consider more structured practice on the point.

- ***There is a silent period during which learners are absorbing the new language prior to producing it.***

  The length of this period may vary for each learner. Allow learners time to adjust to the new language and begin to internalize its sounds and patterns. Use activities that allow them to demonstrate comprehension without having to produce language (e.g., say new vocabulary and ask learners to hold up picture cards that illustrate each word).

- ***Second language acquisition theories are based on research that investigates specific questions with specific populations in defined circumstances.***

  Some theories may be accepted as applicable across populations and contexts; the broad application of others

may be debatable. Evaluate how a theory may or may not relate to adult English language learners in general and to learners in your class specifically. Use second language acquisition theories to help make decisions about balancing different language learning activities; observe and respond to learner progress; and set realistic expectations of what learners can accomplish.

What do instructors need to know about culture and working with multicultural groups?

Culture and language are closely related. Learning a new language involves learning about (but not necessarily wholeheartedly embracing) new ways of thinking, feeling, and expressing. This process can put tremendous pressure on an adult who has a well-developed sense of self in the native language and culture. Because immigrants are, to varying degrees and not always consciously, re-configuring their views of themselves in relation to a new social context, they may at times be ambivalent, confused, or even hostile to the process of adapting to a new culture (Ullman, 1997). This includes language learning. Teachers can help ease this process in a variety of ways:

- Become acquainted with learners' cultures to better understand their perspectives and expectations both inside and outside the classroom (e.g., traditional literacy practices, gender roles, teacher and learner roles, historic interactions with other cultural groups, rhetorical patterns, religious beliefs and customs). Avoid generalizing and stereotyping learners. Acknowledge and respect differences. When discussing cultural differences and traditions in class, focus on descriptions rather than judgments.
- Learners may not be willing or able to participate in activities that involve discussion of taboo subjects, revelation of personal information, or reliving of painful experiences. For example, a refugee who lost family in a war may be very uncomfortable when a teacher asks learners to bring in pictures of their families for an activity. Be aware of the possible implications of activities or topics and offer learners options through which they can respond neutrally, such as bringing a photo of a family from a magazine instead of a personal photo.
- Remember that culture can play a role in all facets of language, including response time. Many English language learners will come from cultures where silence is not uncomfortable. When this factor is coupled with the reality of a slower processing time for listening comprehension in a second language, it suggests that waiting after asking a question (possibly as long as 10 seconds) before repeating or restating the question is advisable.

What instructional approaches support second language development in adults?

Adult English language learners come to ESL classes to master a tool that will help them satisfy other needs, wants, and goals. Therefore, they need to learn about the English language, to practice it, and to use it.

A variety of instructional approaches and techniques support language learning and language use (see Crandall & Peyton, 1993). Teachers need to examine these options and decide which approaches are most appropriate for them, their learners, and their settings. The following is a summary of general strategies to use with learners:

1) ***Get to know your students and their needs.*** English language learners' abilities, experiences, and expectations can affect learning. Get to know their backgrounds and goals as well as proficiency levels and skill needs.

2) ***Use visuals to support your instruction.*** English language learners need context in their learning process. Using gestures, expressions, pictures, and realia makes words and concepts concrete and connections more obvious and memorable. Encourage learners to do the same as they try to communicate meaning.

3) ***Model tasks before asking your learners to do them.*** Learners need to become familiar with vocabulary, conversational patterns, grammar structures, and even activity formats before producing them. Demonstrate a task before asking learners to respond.

4) ***Foster a safe classroom environment.*** Like many adult learners, some English language learners have had negative educational experiences. Many will be unfamiliar with classroom activities and with expectations common in the United States. Include time for activities that allow learners to get to know one another.

5) ***Watch both your teacher talk and your writing.*** Teacher talk refers to the directions, explanations, and general comments and conversations that a teacher may engage in within the classroom. Keep teacher talk simple and clear; use pictures, gestures, demonstrations, and facial expressions to reinforce messages whenever possible. Use print letters, with space between letters and words, and do not overload the chalkboard with too much or disorganized text.

Although it is important for the teacher to understand the structure of the English language, it may not always be appropriate to provide complex explanations of

vocabulary and grammar rules, especially to beginning-level learners. In other words, don't feel you have to explain everything at all times. At times it is enough for learners to know the response needed.

6) ***Use scaffolding techniques to support tasks.*** Build sequencing, structure, and support in learning activities. Ask learners to fill in words in a skeletal dialogue and then create a dialogue of a similar situation, or supply key vocabulary before asking learners to complete a form. Recycle vocabulary, structures, and concepts in the course of instruction. Build redundancy into the curriculum to help learners practice using learned vocabulary or skills in new situations or for different purposes.

7) ***Bring authentic materials to the classroom.*** Use materials like newspapers, signs, sale flyers, telephone books, and brochures in the classroom. These help learners connect what they are learning to the real world and familiarize them with the formats and information in such publications. However, do prepare learners beforehand (e.g., pre-teach vocabulary) and carefully structure lessons (e.g., select relevant, manageable chunks of the authentic material) to make this work.

8) ***Don't overload learners.*** Strike a balance in each activity between elements that are familiar and mastered and those that are new. Asking learners to use both new vocabulary and a new grammatical structure in a role-playing activity where they have to develop original dialogue may be too much for them to do successfully.

9) ***Balance variety and routine in your activities.*** Patterns and routines provide familiarity and security and support learners as they tackle new items. But English language learners, like all learners, have a variety of preferences for processing and learning information. They also can get bored. Give learners opportunities to experience and demonstrate their mastery of language in different ways. Challenge them with activities that speak to their lives, concerns, and goals as adults.

10) ***Celebrate success.*** Progress for language learners can be slow and incremental. Learners need to know that they are moving forward. Make sure expectations are realistic; create opportunities for success; set short-term as well as long-term goals; and help learners recognize and acknowledge their own progress.

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Additional Resources

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ERIC/NCLE Digests and **Q&As** are available free from NCLE, 4646 40th Street NW, Washington, DC 20016-1859; tel: 202-362-0700 x200; fax: 202-363-7204; email: ncle@cal.org; Web: http://www.cal.org/ncle/DIGESTS.

Documents with ED numbers can be ordered from ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS) at tel: 800-443-3742 or 703-440-1400; fax: 703-440-1408; email: service@edrs.com; Web: http://edrs.com.

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Appendix D

Preparing Adult English language Learners for Success

NSCERC Conference
Jacksonville, FL
April 18, 2002

Miriam Burt and MaryAnn Cunningham Florez
National Center for ESL Literacy Education (NCLE)

Objectives:

Participants will discuss principles of adult ESL instruction
Participant will share information on components of adult ESL instruction
Participants will identify technical assistance needs

Agenda

1. Introductions and agenda
2. Getting to know each other: Icebreaker
3. Adult English language learners: Myths and realities
4. Working with adult English language learners: Conversation grid
5. Technical assistance wish list: Brainstorming
6. Resources, questions, and wrap-up

Responding to the Growing Diversity of Language and Culture Among Seniors

Miriam Burt and MaryAnn Florez
National Center for ESL Literacy Education
Center for Applied Linguistics

NSCERC Conference 2002
Jacksonville, FL

NCLE National Center for ESL Literacy Education

CAL

CAL Center for Applied Linguistics

Improving communication through better understanding of language and culture.

CAL seeks to

- ✓ promote and improve the teaching and learning of languages;
- ✓ identify and solve problems related to language and culture;
- ✓ serve as a resource for information about language and culture.

NCLE National Center for ESL Literacy Education

NCLE's goal is to ensure that all who work with adult English language learners have the information and skills necessary to serve this population effectively.

NCLE Scope

NCLE provides practical, research-based information on adult English as a second language education to

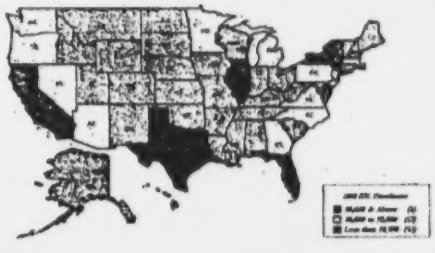
- ✓ teachers and tutors,
- ✓ program administrators,
- ✓ researchers,
- ✓ policymakers,

and all others interested in the education of refugees, immigrants, and other U.S. residents whose native language is other than English.

NCLE The Adult ESL Population

- ✓ 38% of enrollments in federally funded adult programs are ESL (U.S. Department of Education, 2000).
- ✓ 64% of second-language, foreign-born population fall at level 1 of NALS (*Benchmarking Adult Literacy in America*, NCES, 2000).
- ✓ Over 1.3 million of the population 65 years and older report that they do not speak English well or do not speak English at all (U.S. Census, 2000).
- ✓ 20.2 % of the foreign born population is age 55 or older (*Profile of Foreign-Born Population in U.S., 2000*, U.S. Census Bureau, 2001)

State-Administered Adult Education Program
1999 - 2000 ESL Enrollment



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Issues of Diversity Among Seniors Learning English

Issues of Social Identity

"For elderly refugees it has been particularly difficult. At a time in their lives when they should be looking forward to respect and reverence, they find themselves transplanted in a culture which is focused on youth. They have lost their homes, probably many of their family members, and most of all, their honored status."
(From Grognet, 1997)

Issues of Diversity Among Seniors Learning English

Physical and Cognitive Issues

"Studies of aged second language learners have established that the right physical and learning environment can compensate for physiological and socio-cultural variables such as perceptual acuity, psychomotor coordination, and language-memory that are likely to affect their performance and progress."
(From Chou Allender, 1998)

Issues of Diversity Among Seniors Learning English

Issues of Trauma and Mental Health

The singular event of leaving one's homeland and moving to a country with a strange language and culture, is traumatic for immigrants of any age.
(Adapted from Grognet, 1997)

Issues of Diversity Among Seniors Learning English

Experience and Expectations Issues

Many immigrants have had little contact with U.S. culture. Yet they may also arrive with unreal expectations about life in the United States and about the amount of help that will be available to them.
(Adapted from Seufert, 1999)

Issues of Diversity Among Seniors Learning English

Population Diversity Issues

Immigrants coming to the U.S. from Southeast Asia, Europe, Africa, the Americas, and the Middle East range from highly educated, multilingual former cabinet ministers to non-literate hilltribe people who practiced "slash and burn" agriculture.
(Adapted from Grognet, 1997)

Issues of Diversity Among Seniors Learning English

Issues of Goals and Purposes

Older adults rarely need certification or degrees. Some specific motivations for learning language and literacy that have been identified in the research literature include retraining for work, gaining access to information or services, interacting more fully with English speakers in their communities, and communicating with children and grandchildren.
(Adapted from Weinstein, 1993)

Issues of Diversity Among Seniors Learning English

Access Issues

"English classes offer elderly migrants the opportunity to decrease their isolation and facilitate their access to [employment] services and community activities."
(Adapted from Chou Allender, 1998)

Issues of Diversity Among Seniors Learning English

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Addressing the Issues

"Recommendations include highly contextualized language relevant to the learners' experiences, concrete tasks, multisensorial modalities, recycling of content at increasingly deeper levels, and optimal physical conditions. Learner anxiety can be reduced by creating supportive relationships within the class, slowing the pace of instruction, putting the emphasis on receptive rather than productive skills, and carefully and creatively implementing assessments."
(From Chou Allender, 1998)

NCLE Technical Assistance

- ✓Professional development institutes
- ✓Program evaluations
- ✓Curriculum development
- ✓Instructional materials development
- ✓Professional development publications and resources
- ✓Training in BEST administration

Working with Adult English Language Learners: A Conversation Grid

Name	How do you find out what English services are needed?	How do you know what students want to study?	What activities do you use in your classes?	How do you know the students have made progress and are ready for non subsidized work?

Miriam Burt and MaryAnn Cunningham Florez
National Center for ESL Literacy Education (www.cal.org/ncle)
NSCERC Conference, Jacksonville, Florida, April 18, 2002

Adult English Language Learners: Myths and Realities

MARK THE FOLLOWING SENTENCES AS EITHER TRUE OR FALSE.

1. Most adult immigrants want to learn to speak English.

2. Adult English language learners are too old to learn another language well.

3. English language learners run the gamut from those who are not literate in their native language to those with post-graduate degrees from their home countries.

4. It takes about a year for a foreign-born adult to really learn English.

5. It is only necessary to assess learners at the beginning and at the end of a course of study.

6. Successful language learning means using the language in authentic contexts rather than merely learning about the language.

7. We learn only 20% of what we hear, but 80% of what we experience personally.

8. Adults can learn a language most efficiently in homogeneous settings where the teacher can translate everything into the native language.

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3. English language learners run the gamut from those who are not literate in their native language to those with post-graduate degrees from their home countries.
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4. It takes about a year for a foreign-born adult to really learn English.
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8. Adults can learn a language most efficiently in homogeneous settings where the teacher can translate everything into the native language.
   f

Miriam Burt and MaryAnn Cunningham Florez
National Center for ESL Literacy Education www.cal.org/ncle
NSCERC Conference, Jacksonville, Florida, April 18, 2002

NCLE

A Resource for ESL Practitioners

Are you looking for information about how to start an ESL program? Would you like suggestions on how to work with a multilevel class? Do you need speakers or consultants for on-site technical assistance? Do you have a question about the pros and cons of standardized tests versus alternative assessment? Have you considered contacting NCLE?

What is NCLE?

NCLE—pronounced like the five-cent coin—is the National Center for ESL Literacy Education, located at the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL), a nonprofit organization in Washington, DC. NCLE focuses on literacy education for adults and out-of-school youth learning English as a second language. Our mission is to provide practitioners and others with timely information on adult ESL literacy education.

How does NCLE help practitioners?

NCLE provides information and referral services on questions regarding literacy education for adults learning English. Contact us with questions about populations, programs, instructional approaches, and resources.

NCLE offers free publications:

- Digests and Q&As—two- and four-page articles on a variety of current topics in adult ESL, including teaching strategies, civics education, assessment, finding resources on the Web, and family literacy
- Annotated Bibliographies of resource materials from the ERIC database
- *NCLEnotes*—NCLE's semiannual newsletter reporting on ESL literacy news and resources

NCLE staff are available for professional development activities, such as teacher institutes, workshops, program evaluations, and conference sessions.

NCLE staff facilitate the National Institute for Literacy's electronic listserv, NIFL-ESL, for those interested in online discussions about the field of adult ESL instruction.

NCLE collects, evaluates, and abstracts documents about adult ESL literacy and native language literacy education for the ERIC database.

Is NCLE on the World Wide Web?

NCLE's Web site offers 74 full-text ERIC Digests and Q&As, resource collections, FAQs, how to join the NIFL-ESL listserv, information about NCLE publications, and more. Visit NCLE at **http://www.cal.org/ncle**.

How can I contact NCLE?

NCLE's address is 4646 40th Street NW, Washington, DC 20016-1859. We can also be contacted by e-mail: ncle@cal.org; phone: 202-362-0700, extension 200; fax: 202-363-7204; and via our Web site.

NCLE is funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education.

National Center for ESL Literacy Education

NCLE Publications

Summer 2002

The National Center for ESL Literacy Education (NCLE) at the Center for Applied Linguistics provides timely and authoritative information about literacy education for adults learning English as a second language (ESL). NCLE's free publications are arranged below by subject, with the most recent titles first. The Digests (2 pages) and Q&As (4 pages) present overviews of current topics. The Annotated Bibliographies list journal articles and documents from the ERIC database. Single copies are free and may be duplicated. See ordering information inside.

What Works: ESL Methods and Approaches

Digests and Q&As

- English That Works: Preparing Adult English Language Learners for Success in the Workforce and Community (2002) **New!**
- Using Music in the Adult ESL Classroom (2001)
- Dialogue Journals: Interactive Writing to Develop Language and Literacy (Updated 2000)
- Finding and Evaluating Adult ESL Resources on the World Wide Web (2000)
- Critical Literacy for Adult English Language Learners (1999)
- Multiple Intelligences: Theory and Practice in Adult ESL (1999)
- Poetry in the Adult ESL Classroom (1999)
- Using Videos with Adult English Language Learners (1999)
- Current Concepts and Terms in Adult ESL (1998)
- Project-Based Learning for Adult English Language Learners (1998)
- Using Software in the Adult ESL Classroom (1998)
- Using the World Wide Web with Adult ESL Learners (1998)
- Numeracy in the Adult ESL Classroom (1996)
- Philosophies and Approaches in Adult ESL Literacy Instruction (1995)
- Teaching Low-Level Adult ESL Learners (1995)
- Teaching Multilevel Adult ESL Classes (1995)

Language and Culture

Digests and Q&As

- Myths About Language Diversity and Literacy in the United States (1997)
- Official English and English Plus: An Update (1997 ERIC/CLL)
- Social Identity and the Adult ESL Classroom (1997)

Annotated Bibliography

- Native Language Literacy (Updated 2000)

Improving Language Skills

Digests and Q&As

- Improving Adult English Language Learners' Speaking Skills (1999)
- Reading and the Adult English Language Learner (1999)
- Improving Adult ESL Learners' Pronunciation Skills (1998)
- Improving ESL Learners' Listening Skills: At the Workplace and Beyond (1997)
- Improving ESL Learners' Writing Skills (1997)

Annotated Bibliography

- Reading for Adults Learning English as a Second Language (2000)
- Writing Instruction in Adult ESL (1997)

Assessment and Evaluation

Digests and Q&As

- Issues in Accountability and Assessment for Adult ESL Instruction **New!** (2002)
- Needs Assessment for Adult ESL Learners (1997)
- Adult ESL Learner Assessment: Purposes and Tools (1995)
- Evaluating Workplace ESL Instructional Programs (1995)

Annotated Bibliographies

- Content Standards for Adult ESL **New!** (2002)
- Program Standards for Adult ESL **New!** (2002)
- Evaluation of Adult ESL Programs (1998)
- Evaluation of Workplace ESL Programs (1998)

Family and Intergenerational ESL Literacy

Digests and Q&As

- Family and Intergenerational Literacy in Multilingual Communities (1998)
- Using Multicultural Children's Literature in Adult ESL Classes (1998)
- Valuing Diversity in the Multicultural Classroom (1994)

Annotated Bibliographies

- Family ESL Programs (1999)
- Family ESL Literacy Curriculum Guides (1998)

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Specific Populations

Digests and Q&As

- ESL Instruction and Adults with Learning Disabilities (2000)
- Trauma and the Adult English Language Learner (2000)
- Mental Health and the Adult Refugee: The Role of the ESL Teacher (1999)
- Refugees as English Language Learners: Issues and Concerns (1999)
- ESL Literacy for a Linguistic Minority: The Deaf Experience (1992)

Annotated Bibliographies

- Literacy-Level ESL Learners (2002) **New!**
- Learning Disabilities and English Language Learners (2000)
- Women and ESL Literacy (1999)

Background and Policy Issues

Digests and Q&As

- ESL Instruction in Adult Education: Findings from a National Evaluation (1995)
- Estimating Literacy in the Multilingual United States: Issues and Concerns (1994)

Workplace and Vocational ESL

(See also *Assessment and Evaluation* and *Program Design*)

Digests and Q&As

- Integrating Employment Skills into Adult ESL Instruction (1997)
- Union-Sponsored Workplace ESL Instruction (1996)
- Selling Workplace ESL Instructional Programs (1995)

Annotated Bibliographies

- ESL Literacy and Labor Education (1998)
- Workplace ESL Instruction and Programs (1998)
- ESL Instruction in the Health Care Settings (1997)
- ESL Instruction in the Hospitality Industry (1997)
- Workplace ESL Literacy Guides and Curricula (1997)

Selected ERIC Digests, Q&As, and Annotated Bibliographies are available on the NCLE Web site at

www.cal.org/ncle

Staff Development

Digests and Q&As

- Beginning to Work With Adult English Language Learners: Some Considerations (2001)
- Reflective Teaching Practice in Adult ESL Settings (2001)
- Online Professional Development for Adult ESL Educators (2000)
- Trends in Staff Development for Adult ESL Instructors (1998)
- The Adult ESL Teaching Profession (1997)
- Using Volunteers as Aides in the Adult ESL Classroom (1997)
- Adult Literacy Practitioners as Researchers (1994)

Program Design

Digests and Q&As

- Health Literacy and Adult English Language Learners **New!** (2002)
- Library Literacy Programs for English Language Learners (2001)
- Civics Education for Adult English Language Learners (2000)
- Native Language Literacy and Adult ESL Instruction (1999)
- Adult ESL Learners: Learning from the Australian Perspective (1998)
- Citizenship Preparation for Adult ESL Learners (1997)
- Planning, Implementing, and Evaluating Workplace ESL Programs (1996)
- English as a Second Language in Volunteer-Based Programs (1995)
- Outreach and Retention in Adult ESL Literacy Programs (1995)
- Transitioning Adult ESL Learners to Academic Programs (1995)

Annotated Bibliographies

- Civics Education for English Language Learners (2001)
- Health Literacy for Adult English Language Learners (2001)
- Multilevel Materials for Adult ESL Instruction (2000)
- Citizenship Education for Immigrants (1999)
- Curriculum Guides for Adult ESL Literacy Programs (1998)

Order Form

NCLE Publications

Digests and Q&As

- ❑ Adult ESL Learner Assessment: Purposes and Tools
- ❑ Adult ESL Learners: Learning from the Australian Perspective
- ❑ The Adult ESL Teaching Profession
- ❑ Adult Literacy Practitioners as Researchers
- ❑ Beginning to Work With Adult English Language Learners: Some Considerations
- ❑ Citizenship Preparation for Adult ESL Learners
- ❑ Civics Education for Adult English Language Learners
- ❑ Critical Literacy for Adult English Language Learners
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- ❑ ESL Instruction and Adults with Learning Disabilities
- ❑ ESL Instruction in Adult Education: Findings from a National Evaluation
- ❑ ESL Literacy for a Linguistic Minority: The Deaf Experience
- ❑ Estimating Literacy in the Multilingual United States: Issues and Concerns
- ❑ Evaluating Workplace ESL Instructional Programs
- ❑ Family and Intergenerational Literacy in Multilingual Communities
- ❑ Finding and Evaluating Adult ESL Resources on the WWW
- ❑ Health Literacy and Adult English Language Learners
- ❑ Improving Adult English Language Learners' Speaking Skills
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Updated: March, 2002

Beginning to Work With Adult English Language Learners: Some Considerations

MaryAnn Cunningham Florez and Miriam Burt, National Center for ESL Literacy Education

In many parts of the United States, the number of nonnative adult learners seeking English language instruction is growing. States such as North Carolina, Arkansas, Georgia, Tennessee, Nebraska, and Iowa, not historically associated with immigrant influxes, have been experiencing increased growth rates with these populations in the last decade (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001). In 1998, 47% of the participants in federally funded adult education programs were there to learn English as a second language (ESL) (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, 1999). As immigrant populations seek English language instruction, the need for teachers to serve them is drawing people into the adult ESL teaching field. Some of these teachers have training and experience working with adults learning English. However, many are working with these learners for the first time.

What do teachers who are beginning to work with adult English language learners need to know? This Q&A discusses recommendations in four areas: application of principles of adult learning in ESL contexts, second language acquisition, culture and working with multicultural groups, and instructional approaches that support language development in adults. It is not intended to be comprehensive. Rather, it gives teachers an overview of important points, suggests basic strategies to use, and provides resources to consult for further information.

How do the principles of adult learning apply to adult English language learners?

Malcolm Knowles' (1973) principles of andragogy, the art and science of facilitating adult learning, are still seminal to many of today's theories about learning and instruction for adults.

> Adults are self-directed in their learning.
> Adults have reservoirs of experience that serve as resources as they learn.
> Adults are practical, problem-solving-oriented learners.
> Adults want their learning to be immediately applicable to their lives.
> Adults want to know why something needs to be learned.

In general, this picture of the practical, purposeful, self-directed learner is representative of adults, whether they are native or nonnative English speakers. All adult learners need adult-appropriate content, materials, and activities that speak to their needs and interests and allow them to demonstrate their knowledge and abilities.

So what is different for English language learners? Obviously, they need help with the language as they learn content. Teachers working with English language learners also need to think about how Knowles' adult learner characteristics are filtered through culture, language, and experience. For example, it is not uncommon to find nonnative learners who may be hesitant to take charge of their own learning. Their educational experiences in their countries may have taught them that the teacher is the unquestioned expert. They may be resistant to a learner-centered classroom where they are expected to develop goals and work in groups with other learners (Shank & Terrill, 1995).

Nonnative learners also may resist the lifeskill-oriented instruction that is common in many adult ESL programs. Coming from cultures where learning is a high-status, academic endeavor, they may expect a more academically oriented environment (Hardman, 1999). Because of this, teachers should explain to learners why they are learning what they are learning in this new way. Similarly, because many English language learners may have studied English grammar and are familiar with the terms describing language components, instructors should be prepared, when appropriate, to answer learners' questions about sentence structure and vocabulary.

What do instructors need to know about second language acquisition (SLA)?

Theories about how languages are learned can be complex. However, having some understanding of how people acquire and use languages can be useful to the teachers of adult English language learners.

Second language acquisition theories address cognitive issues (how the brain processes information in general and language in particular), affective issues (how emotions factor into second language processing and learning), and linguistic issues (how learners interact with and internalize

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new language systems). The following are some suggestions that instructors can use in the classroom. They are drawn from theories of second language acquisition generally accepted as relevant for most second language learners (summarized from Brown, 2001; Krashen, 1981).

- ***Meaningful interaction and natural communication in the target language are necessary for successful language acquisition.***

  Learners need to *use* the language, not simply talk about it. Give learners opportunities and purposes for communication that reflect or relate to their lives (e.g., role-playing a doctor/patient exchange or creating a chart with information on local medical services). Use authentic materials in activities whenever possible (e.g., listening for details in a recorded telephone message or reading classified ads from the local newspaper).

- ***Effective language use involves an automatic processing of language.***

  To become proficient, learners need to move from a concentrated focus on grammar, forms, and structures to using language as a tool to accomplish communication tasks. Think about the purpose of each lesson (e.g., is it important that the learner produce a specific grammar point or communicate an idea?) and interject error correction to serve those purposes. For example, if the activity is an oral substitution drill practicing the correct use of irregular past tense forms, it is appropriate to correct the verb form being used. However, if the focus of the lesson is making small talk on the job—a communication that involves use of irregular past tense verbs—correction may simply consist of a repetition of the correct form by the teacher (e.g., "I go to a movie last Saturday" is corrected by, "Oh, you went to a movie. What movie did you see?").

- ***Language learners can monitor their speech for correctness when they have time to focus their attention on form and know the language rules involved.***

  Give learners sufficient time for activities, to communicate, and to monitor their performance. Integrate lessons on grammar, structures, and language rules that are relevant to the communication task at hand (e.g., present lessons on imperatives when discussing giving directions) so that learners become familiar with correct structures. Focus activity objectives so that learners are not asked to process and monitor too many points at one time (e.g., asking learners to use new vocabulary and correctly use present and present progressive verb forms in an unfamiliar dialogue format can be overwhelming).

- ***Second language acquisition occurs when learners are exposed to language that is at and slightly above their level of comprehension.***

  In the materials you use and in your own speech, expose learners to language that is both at and slightly above what they can comfortably understand. Offer a balance of easier reading and listening activities with more challenging ones. Provide pictures, gestures, and prompts when learners are asked to use more complex language.

- ***People have affective filters (created by a variety of factors such as motivation, self-confidence, or anxiety) that can support or disrupt acquisition of a second language.***

  Create a classroom environment in which learners feel comfortable using and taking risks with English. Use activities that ask learners to work together or share information to build a sense of familiarity and community. Make sure the physical environment is as comfortable as possible. Avoid constant error correction and include activities that focus on overall ability to communicate meaning. Recycle topics or activities that motivate learners.

- ***There are "interlanguage" periods during which learners make systematic errors that are a natural part of language learning.***

  These may be similar to those of a child learning a first language (e.g., adding *ed* to signify all past tense verbs) or similar to patterns in a learner's native language (e.g., Spanish speakers placing adjectives after nouns, such as *shirt blue*). If errors appear to be normal and developmental, provide feedback and modeling of correct structures to support learners as they move through these steps. If an error persists, consider more structured practice on the point.

- ***There is a silent period during which learners are absorbing the new language prior to producing it.***

  The length of this period may vary for each learner. Allow learners time to adjust to the new language and begin to internalize its sounds and patterns. Use activities that allow them to demonstrate comprehension without having to produce language (e.g., say new vocabulary and ask learners to hold up picture cards that illustrate each word).

- ***Second language acquisition theories are based on research that investigates specific questions with specific populations in defined circumstances.***

  Some theories may be accepted as applicable across populations and contexts; the broad application of others

may be debatable. Evaluate how a theory may or may not relate to adult English language learners in general and to learners in your class specifically. Use second language acquisition theories to help make decisions about balancing different language learning activities; observe and respond to learner progress; and set realistic expectations of what learners can accomplish.

What do instructors need to know about culture and working with multicultural groups?

Culture and language are closely related. Learning a new language involves learning about (but not necessarily wholeheartedly embracing) new ways of thinking, feeling, and expressing. This process can put tremendous pressure on an adult who has a well-developed sense of self in the native language and culture. Because immigrants are, to varying degrees and not always consciously, re-configuring their views of themselves in relation to a new social context, they may at times be ambivalent, confused, or even hostile to the process of adapting to a new culture (Ullman, 1997). This includes language learning. Teachers can help ease this process in a variety of ways:

- Become acquainted with learners' cultures to better understand their perspectives and expectations both inside and outside the classroom (e.g., traditional literacy practices, gender roles, teacher and learner roles, historic interactions with other cultural groups, rhetorical patterns, religious beliefs and customs). Avoid generalizing and stereotyping learners. Acknowledge and respect differences. When discussing cultural differences and traditions in class, focus on descriptions rather than judgments.
- Learners may not be willing or able to participate in activities that involve discussion of taboo subjects, revelation of personal information, or reliving of painful experiences. For example, a refugee who lost family in a war may be very uncomfortable when a teacher asks learners to bring in pictures of their families for an activity. Be aware of the possible implications of activities or topics and offer learners options through which they can respond neutrally, such as bringing a photo of a family from a magazine instead of a personal photo.
- Remember that culture can play a role in all facets of language, including response time. Many English language learners will come from cultures where silence is not uncomfortable. When this factor is coupled with the reality of a slower processing time for listening comprehension in a second language, it suggests that waiting after asking a question (possibly as long as 10 seconds) before repeating or restating the question is advisable.

What instructional approaches support second language development in adults?

Adult English language learners come to ESL classes to master a tool that will help them satisfy other needs, wants, and goals. Therefore, they need to learn about the English language, to practice it, and to use it.

A variety of instructional approaches and techniques support language learning and language use (see Crandall & Peyton, 1993). Teachers need to examine these options and decide which approaches are most appropriate for them, their learners, and their settings. The following is a summary of general strategies to use with learners:

1) ***Get to know your students and their needs.*** English language learners' abilities, experiences, and expectations can affect learning. Get to know their backgrounds and goals as well as proficiency levels and skill needs.

2) ***Use visuals to support your instruction.*** English language learners need context in their learning process. Using gestures, expressions, pictures, and realia makes words and concepts concrete and connections more obvious and memorable. Encourage learners to do the same as they try to communicate meaning.

3) ***Model tasks before asking your learners to do them.*** Learners need to become familiar with vocabulary, conversational patterns, grammar structures, and even activity formats before producing them. Demonstrate a task before asking learners to respond.

4) ***Foster a safe classroom environment.*** Like many adult learners, some English language learners have had negative educational experiences. Many will be unfamiliar with classroom activities and with expectations common in the United States. Include time for activities that allow learners to get to know one another.

5) ***Watch both your teacher talk and your writing.*** Teacher talk refers to the directions, explanations, and general comments and conversations that a teacher may engage in within the classroom. Keep teacher talk simple and clear; use pictures, gestures, demonstrations, and facial expressions to reinforce messages whenever possible. Use print letters, with space between letters and words, and do not overload the chalkboard with too much or disorganized text.

Although it is important for the teacher to understand the structure of the English language, it may not always be appropriate to provide complex explanations of

vocabulary and grammar rules, especially to beginning-level learners. In other words, don't feel you have to explain everything at all times. At times it is enough for learners to know the response needed.

6) ***Use scaffolding techniques to support tasks.*** Build sequencing, structure, and support in learning activities. Ask learners to fill in words in a skeletal dialogue and then create a dialogue of a similar situation, or supply key vocabulary before asking learners to complete a form. Recycle vocabulary, structures, and concepts in the course of instruction. Build redundancy into the curriculum to help learners practice using learned vocabulary or skills in new situations or for different purposes.

7) ***Bring authentic materials to the classroom.*** Use materials like newspapers, signs, sale flyers, telephone books, and brochures in the classroom. These help learners connect what they are learning to the real world and familiarize them with the formats and information in such publications. However, do prepare learners beforehand (e.g., pre-teach vocabulary) and carefully structure lessons (e.g., select relevant, manageable chunks of the authentic material) to make this work.

8) ***Don't overload learners.*** Strike a balance in each activity between elements that are familiar and mastered and those that are new. Asking learners to use both new vocabulary and a new grammatical structure in a role-playing activity where they have to develop original dialogue may be too much for them to do successfully.

9) ***Balance variety and routine in your activities.*** Patterns and routines provide familiarity and security and support learners as they tackle new items. But English language learners, like all learners, have a variety of preferences for processing and learning information. They also can get bored. Give learners opportunities to experience and demonstrate their mastery of language in different ways. Challenge them with activities that speak to their lives, concerns, and goals as adults.

10) ***Celebrate success.*** Progress for language learners can be slow and incremental. Learners need to know that they are moving forward. Make sure expectations are realistic; create opportunities for success; set short-term as well as long-term goals; and help learners recognize and acknowledge their own progress.

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Adult ESL Learner Assessment: Purposes and Tools

by Miriam Burt and Fran Keenan
National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education (NCLE)

Learner assessment is conducted in adult basic education (ABE) and adult English as a second language (ESL) educational programs for many reasons—to place learners in appropriate instructional levels, to measure their ongoing progress, to qualify them to enroll in academic or job training programs, to verify program effectiveness, and to demonstrate learner gains in order to justify continued funding for a program. Because of this multiplicity of objectives, learner assessment involves using a variety of instruments and procedures to gather data on a regular basis to ensure that programs are "identifying learners' needs, documenting the learners' progress toward meeting their own goals, and ascertaining the extent to which the project objectives are being met" (Holt, 1994, p. 6).

This digest looks at learner assessment in adult ESL programs. It describes commercially available tests and alternative assessment tools, discusses key issues in assessment, and highlights some of the differences between assessment and evaluation.

Commercially Available Tests

In adult basic education, commercially available instruments such as the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) and the Adult Basic Learning Examination (ABLE) predominate as assessment tools because they have construct validity and scoring reliability, are easy to administer to groups, require minimal training on the part of the teacher, and are often stipulated by funding sources (Solórzano, 1994; Wrigley, 1992). ESL tests most commonly used in adult education programs are the Basic English Skills Test (BEST) and the CASAS ESL Appraisal (Sticht, 1990).

The BEST, originally developed by the Center for Applied Linguistics in 1982 to test newly arrived Southeast Asian refugees, assesses English literacy (reading and writing) skills and listening and speaking skills. Although this test measures language and literacy skills at the lowest levels (no speaking is necessary for some items as learners respond to pictures by pointing), it requires some training on the part of the tester. Also, the oral segment is lengthy and must be administered individually (Sticht, 1990).

The Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) of California has developed competencies, training manuals, and assessment tools for ABE and ESL programs. The CASAS ESL Appraisal is multiple choice and includes reading and listening items. It is easy to administer because it is given to groups, but does not test oral skills (Sticht, 1990).

Other tests used for ESL are the NYSPLACE Test, published by New York State, which is designed for placement and includes a basic English literacy screening and an oral assessment; the Basic Inventory of Natural Language (BINL) which provides a grammatical analysis of spoken language; the Henderson-Moriarty ESL Placement (HELP) test which was designed to measure the literacy skills (in the native language and in English) and the oral English proficiency of Southeast Asian refugee adults; and Literacy Volunteers of America's ESL Oral Assessment (ESLOA) which assesses a learner's ability to speak and understand English.

Limitations of Commercially Available Tests

The use of commercially available tests with adult learners is problematic because these tools may not adequately assess individual learner strengths and weaknesses especially at the lowest level of literacy skills. Such tests do not necessarily measure what has been learned in class, nor address learner goals (Lytle & Wolf, 1989; Wrigley, 1992).

Some testing issues are unique to ESL learners. It is not always clear whether ESL learners have trouble with selected test items because of difficulties with reading, with the vocabulary, or with the cultural notions underlying the test items (Wrigley & Guth, 1992). Another problem may be that some low-literate ESL learners are unfamiliar with classroom conventions such as test taking. Henderson and Moriarty, in their introduction to the HELP test, advise that ESL programs should evaluate whether learners possess the functional skills necessary for writing (such as holding a pencil), are familiar with classroom behaviors (such as responding to teacher questions), and are able to keep up with the pace of learning in beginning level classes (Wrigley and Guth, 1992).

Some would argue that the tests themselves are not the problem, but rather their inappropriate use, for example, administering a commercially available adult *literacy* test (assesses reading and writing skills) to measure English language *proficiency* (listening and speaking ability). Funding stipulations may specify inappropriate instruments (Solórzano, 1994) or even tests developed for native speakers (e.g., TABE, ABLE). Wilde (1994) suggests that programs maximize the benefits of commercially available, norm-referenced, and diagnostic tests by, (1) choosing tests that match the demographic and educational backgrounds of the learners; (2) interpreting scores carefully; (3) ensuring that test objectives match the program objectives and curricular content; and (4) using additional instruments to measure learner achievement.

Alternatives to Commercially Available Tests

Due in part to the drawbacks of the tests described above, many adult (and K-12) educators promote the use of alternative assessment tools that incorporate learner goals and relate more closely to instruction (Lytle & Wolfe, 1989). Alternative assessment (also known as classroom-based, authentic, or congruent assessment) includes such tools as surveys, interviews, checklists, observation measures, teacher-developed tests, learner self-assessment, portfolios and other performance samples, and performance-based tests (Balliro, 1993; Genesee, 1994; Isserlis, 1992; Wrigley, 1992.)

Alternative assessment allows for flexibility in gathering information about learners and measures what has been taught in class. *Learner portfolios*, collections of individual work, are common examples of alternative assessment. Portfolios can include such items as reports on books read, notes from learner/teacher

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interviews, learners' reflections on their progress, writing samples, data from performance-based assessments, *and* scores on commercially available tests (Fingeret, 1993; Wrigley, 1992). From *learner interviews*, administrators and instructors get information to help with placement decisions and to determine an individual's progress. In one survey of adult teachers, 80% reported using oral interviews to assess what students needed and what they were learning (Davis and Yap, 1992). From program-developed *performance-based tests*, instructors, administrators, and the learners themselves get information on how learners use English and basic skills regularly. These tests, in which items (such as reading a chart or locating information on a schedule) are put in actual contexts the learners might encounter (Alamprese & Kay, 1993; Holt, 1994), are common in workplace programs. Authentic materials such as job schedules, pay stubs, and union contracts provide the context in which literacy skills are assessed.

Alternative assessment procedures, however, are not a panacea. Maintaining portfolios is time consuming for both learners and teachers. The cultural expectations and educational backgrounds of ESL learners might make them especially resistant to the use of participatory and other alternative assessments (Wrigley & Guth, 1992). Furthermore, funders often require "hard data," and it is difficult to quantify outcomes without using commercially available tests. Finally, data from alternative assessment instruments may not meet eligibility requirements for job training programs, or higher level classes, or certification (Balliro, 1993; Lytle & Wolfe, 1989).

Because of these issues, ESL programs often use a combination of commercially available and program-developed assessment instruments to assess literacy and language proficiency (Guth & Wrigley, 1992; Wrigley, 1992).

Learner Assessment and Program Evaluation

Although learner progress, as measured both by commercially available and alternative assessment instruments, is an indicator of program effectiveness, it is not the only factor in evaluating ABE and adult ESL programs. Other quantifiable indicators include learner retention, learner promotion to higher levels of instruction, and learner transition to jobs or to other types of programs (e.g., moving from an adult ESL program to a vocational program, or to a for-credit ESL or academic program). Less quantifiable learner outcomes include heightened self-esteem and increased participation in community, school, and church events (Alamprese & Kay, 1993).

Other measures of adult education program effectiveness depend to a large extent on program goals. In family literacy programs, increased parental participation in children's learning, parents reading more frequently to their children, and the presence of more books in the home might indicate success (Holt, 1994). Workplace program outcomes might include promotion to higher level jobs, increased participation in work teams, and improved worker attitude that shows up in better job attendance and in a willingness to learn new skills (Alamprese & Kay, 1993).

Conclusion

Assessment is problematic for adult ESL educators searching for tools that will quantify learner gains and program success to funders, demonstrate improvement in English proficiency and literacy skills to learners, and clarify for the educators themselves what has been learned and what has not. Dissatisfaction with commercially available tools has been widespread, and many teachers have felt left out of the process of determining how to assess learner gains in a way that helps teaching *and* learning. Current practice and theory seem to recommend using a combination of commercially available and program-developed alternative assessment instruments. Further research in this area both by teachers and researchers is warranted.

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ERIC Digest

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National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education

Needs Assessment for Adult ESL Learners

by Kathleen Santopietro Weddel, Colorado Department of Education
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Assessment of literacy needs from the learner's perspective is an important part of an instructional program. Learners come to adult English as a second language (ESL) literacy programs for diverse reasons. Although they may say they just want to "learn English," they frequently have very specific learning goals and needs: for example, to be able to read to their children, to get a job, or to become a citizen. If their needs are not met, they are more likely to drop out than to voice their dissatisfaction (Grant & Shank, 1993). The needs assessment process can be used as the basis for developing curricula and classroom practice that are responsive to these needs.

Although learner needs assessment encompasses both what learners know and can do (learner proficiencies) and what they want to learn and be able to do, this digest focuses on ways to determine what learners want or believe they need to learn. Many of the activities described can also include or lead to assessment of proficiencies, and many of the sources cited include both types of assessment. (See Burt & Keenan, 1995, for a discussion of assessment of what learners know.)

What is Needs Assessment?

The word "assess" comes from the Latin term "assidere," which means to "sit beside." Process-minded and participatory-oriented adult educators "sit beside" learners to learn about their proficiencies and backgrounds, educational goals, and expected outcomes, immersing themselves in the lives and views of their students (Auerbach, 1994).

A needs assessment for use with adult learners of English is a tool that examines, from the perspective of the learner, what kinds of English, native language, and literacy skills the learner already believes he or she has; the literacy contexts in which the learner lives and works; what the learner wants and needs to know to function in those contexts; what the learner expects to gain from the instructional program; and what might need to be done in the native language or with the aid of an interpreter. The needs assessment focuses and builds on learners' accomplishments and abilities rather than deficits, allowing learners to articulate and display what they already know (Auerbach, 1994; Holt, 1994).

Needs assessment is a continual process and takes place throughout the instructional program (Burnaby, 1989; Savage, 1993), thus influencing student placement, materials selection, curriculum design, and teaching approaches (Wrigley & Guth, 1992). As Burnaby (1989) noted, "The curriculum content and learning experiences to take place in class should be negotiated between learners, teacher, and coordinator at the beginning of the project and renegotiated regularly during the project" (p. 20). At the beginning of the program, needs assessment might be used to determine appropriate program types and course content; during the program, it assures that learner and program goals are being met and allows for necessary program changes; at the end of the program, it can be used for assessing progress and planning future directions for the learners and the program.

Why is Needs Assessment Important?

A needs assessment serves a number of purposes:

- It aids administrators, teachers, and tutors with learner placement and in developing materials, curricula, skills assessments, teaching approaches, and teacher training.
- It assures a flexible, responsive curriculum rather than a fixed, linear curriculum determined ahead of time by instructors.
- It provides information to the instructor and learner about what the learner brings to the course (if done at the beginning), what has been accomplished (if done during the course), and what the learner wants and needs to know next.

Factors that contribute to learner attrition in adult literacy programs include inappropriate placement and instructional materials and approaches that are not relevant to learners' needs and lives (Brod, 1995). When learners know that educators understand and want to address their needs and interests, they are motivated to continue in a program and to learn.

Assessment Tools

Needs assessments with ESL learners, as well as with those in adult basic education programs, can take a variety of forms, including survey questionnaires, where learners check areas of interest or need, open-ended interviews, or informal performance observations. For needs assessment to be effective, tools and activities must be appropriate for the particular learner or group of learners. For example, reading texts in English might be translated into the learners' native language, read aloud by the teacher or an aide (in English or the native language), or represented pictorially. Types of needs assessment tools and activities include

Survey questionnaires. Many types of questionnaires have been designed to determine learners' literacy needs. Frequently they consist of a list of topics, skills, or language and literacy uses. The learners indicate what they already know or want to know by checking in the appropriate column or box, or they may be asked to use a scale to rank the importance of each item. For beginning learners who do not read English, pictures depicting different literacy contexts (such as using a telephone, buying groceries, driving a car, and using transportation) can be shown, and learners can mark the contexts that apply to them. For example, using transportation could be represented by pictures of a bus, a subway, and a taxi. The list of questionnaire items can be prepared ahead of time by the teacher or generated by the students themselves through class discussion.

Learner-compiled inventories of language and literacy use. A more open-ended way to get the same information that surveys offer is to have learners

keep lists of ways they use language and literacy and to update them periodically (McGrail & Schwartz, 1993).

Learner interviews. Interviews with learners, either one-on-one or in small groups, in their native language or in English, can provide valuable information about what learners know, what their interests are, and the ways they use or hope to use literacy.

Review of reading materials. An instructor can spread out a range of reading materials on the table (e.g., newspapers, magazines, children's books, comics, and greeting cards, and ask learners which they would like to read and whether they would like to work in class on any of them. A similar activity can be done with different types of writing.

Class discussions. Showing pictures of adults in various contexts, the teacher can ask, "What literacy skills does this person want to develop?" and have learners generate a list. The teacher then asks, "Why do you want to develop literacy skills?" Learners might be more willing to express their desires if they move from the impersonal to the personal in this way (Auerbach, 1994).

Personal or dialogue journals. Learners' journals—where they write freely about their activities, experiences, and plans—can be a rich source of information about their literacy needs (Peyton, 1993).

Timelines. Learners can prepare their own personal timelines, in writing or pictorially, that indicate major events in their lives as well as future goals. Discussion can then focus on how progress towards those goals can be met through the class (Santopietro, 1991).

Needs Assessment in One Adult ESL Program

The Arlington Education and Employment Program (REEP) in Arlington, Virginia periodically conducts a program-wide needs assessment to determine the interests and goals of ESL learners in the community. The director and program coordinators collaborate with community agencies, schools, and employers to identify ways in which the REEP program can prepare learners for the economic, civic, and family opportunities available in the community. This information is then used for program planning purposes, such as developing courses, curricula, and materials, and preparing needs assessment tools. Learner interviews and a placement test assessing general language proficiency are used to place learners in an instructional level. Once they are in the classroom, learners participate in a continual needs assessment process to plan what they want to learn and how they want to learn it.

In-class needs assessment is most successful when learners understand its purpose and are comfortable with each other. Because of this, the first curriculum unit in every new class is called "Getting Started" (Arlington Education and Employment Program, 1994). It enables learners to get to know one another through the needs assessment process as they acknowledge shared concerns and begin to build a community in the classroom (Van Duzer, 1995). For several days, some class time may be spent discussing where they use English, what they do with it, what problems they have encountered, and why they feel they need to improve their language skills and knowledge. Through this process, both the learners and the teacher become aware of the goals and needs represented in the class. A variety of level-appropriate techniques, like those mentioned above, are used to come to a concensus on the class instructional plan and to develop individual learning plans. Learners select from both program-established curricular units and from their identified needs. The needs assessment process serves as both a learning and information-gathering process as learners use critical thinking, negotiation, and problem-solving skills to reach this plan.

Once the class instructional plan is selected, ways are discussed to meet individual learner needs apart from the whole class such as through small in-class focus groups, working with a volunteer, time in the program's computer learning lab, assistance obtaining self-study materials, or referral to other programs. The class plan is revisited each time a unit is completed to remind the learners where they have been and where they are going and to enable the teacher to make changes or adjustments to content or instruction as new needs are uncovered.

Conclusion

Needs assessment can take many forms and can be carried out at different times during the instructional process. Whatever the focus and format, the basic purpose is to determine what learners want and need to learn. When curriculum content, materials, and teaching approaches match learners' perceived and actual needs, learner motivation and success are enhanced.

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ERIC PAIE Q & A

June 1997

Project in Adult Immigrant Education PAIE
National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education

Integrating Employment Skills into Adult ESL Instruction

by Allene Guss Grognet
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This *Q & A* discusses how employment preparation can be integrated into the English as a second language (ESL) curriculum, whether in a workplace or a standard adult ESL program. It looks briefly at the history of employment-related ESL; describes the skills needed to get a job, to survive on the job, and to thrive on the job; suggests classroom activities to promote these skills; and touches on future directions for the field.

What is the Historical Link Between Employment and Adult Education?

In the United States, the federal role in adult education was created in 1964 under the Economic Opportunity Act. Under title II-B of the act, the Adult Education Program was established in which instruction in reading and writing English was an allowable option, i.e. a choice, for states. Two years later, in 1966, Congress enacted the Adult Education Act (AEA) which expanded the program to allow services to those with limited English speaking proficiency (U.S. Department of Education, 1991).

According to Moore and Stavrianos (1994), the AEA was established to enact adult education programs that would:

> enable adults to acquire the basic educational skills necessary for literate functioning; provide adults with sufficient basic education to enable them to benefit from job training and retraining programs, and obtain and retain productive employment so that they might more fully enjoy the benefits of citizenship; [and] enable adults to continue their education to at least the level of completion of secondary school. (p. 4)

As the field of adult education grew over the next 30 years, the three most common programs were ABE (for learners with literacy skills below the eighth grade level); GED (designed to prepare students to obtain a high school equivalency certificate); and ESL (services for limited-English-speaking adults). But for many years, job training and retraining, as an essential part of the act, received little emphasis.

In the national elections of 1994, the composition of the U.S. Congress changed. Since then, there have been efforts to cut, combine, and streamline federal programs. In the process, the link between education and job training and retraining has been confirmed. In April 1997, the House Committee on Education and the Workforce approved a bill that would "consolidate more than 60 employment, job-training, and adult education programs into three block grants for the states: an adult employment and training grant, a youth employment and training grant, and an adult education and family literacy grant" (United House Education Committee, 1997, p. 67). It is expected that this bill, or one similar to it, will be signed into law, strengthening the connection between employment and education.

What were Early Links Between Employment and ESL?

In the 1970s, a growing number of guest workers in west European countries prompted British educators (Jupp & Hodlin, 1975; Wilkens, 1976; & Widdowson, 1978) to reevaluate the current approach to teaching English as a second language. In 1975, Jupp & Hodlin's *Industrial English* was published, reflecting the authors' experience of the previous five years working with Asian immigrants who had settled in Britain. The book asked the question, "How adequate is orthodox language teaching theory [which was based on the use of audiolingual and grammar translation approaches] to the communicative tasks of our guest worker?" (p. 5). This text started the field toward building a theory of workplace/workforce instruction. Drawing from developments in the field of linguistics, cognitive psychology, adult education, and others, the notional-functional approach began to take shape. This approach changed the emphasis in language teaching from a concern with form or structure to a concern with function. In other words, the curriculum was based on what one could do with language (linguistically)—for example, ask for help, state preferences, or make suggestions—rather than on the rules of grammar.

The United States had its own impetus for linguistic change in the 1970s with the arrival of almost 200,000 Indochinese refugees. The refugee influx forced the field to find ways to teach oral and written language to nonliterate learners who had previously been largely ignored because of their low numbers (Holt, 1995). When the field began looking beyond the survival needs of these refugees—especially those with low-level English skills and little previous education—notional-functional principles (Jupp & Hodlin, 1975) were adopted, and ideas from competency-based education were adapted and incorporated as well. The competency-based ESL curricula shared the aims of the notional-functional curricula in that learners were taught what to do with language. However, competency-based curricula stated language learning objectives in terms of what the student will be able to do with language in the real world, for example, read a want ad, follow directions in a manual, take a telephone message, or participate in a small group discussion at work.

How Does Workforce Instruction Differ From Workplace Instruction?

The curricula of the 1970s and early 1980s, although purporting to meet learner needs, were really reflective more of the workplace than the workforce. Surveys and interviews were conducted more often with employers, managers and supervisors than with workers or coworkers. Very often, the only employees who participated in needs analyses were those deemed outstanding at their work. And when employees were part of the process, they were usually asked

what and *how* questions: "What tools, equipment, and/or work aids do you use in your job?"; "What do you do with the tools and equipment at the end of the day?"; "What do you do when the equipment fails?"; and, "How do you operate this dishwasher?" Questions such as the following that are also needed for language development—"Why do you think you have to follow such and such a procedure?"—were seldom asked.

By the mid-eighties, there was a new emphasis in curriculum design and classroom methodology in the field of adult instruction. This was a more humanistic trend, calling for the learner to be an active creator, not a passive participant in the learning process (see, for example, Bell & Burnaby, 1984; Fingeret & Jurmo, 1989). The curriculum became more of a flexible framework, where teachers and learners together identified and created the crucial ingredients that empower learners, freeing them to learn and grow. It became learner centered.

As the curriculum became more learner centered, the question was posed whether the goal of workplace language programs was to empower workers or make them better at their jobs (McGroarty & Scott, 1993). Advocates of workforce education favored empowering the worker and leaned toward worker-centered learning that addressed the needs of the whole person "to enlarge and enrich their capabilities as individuals, family members, trade unionists, and citizens" (A. Sarmiento, personal communication, January, 1997). Advocates of workplace education, on the other hand, saw a curriculum based largely on a needs analysis and a linguistic task analysis of the language and communication patterns of a particular workplace. While there may have been worker input into the needs analysis, the curriculum development process did not necessarily target those linguistic tasks that develop the whole person (McGroarty & Scott, 1993).

Over time, however, the distinction between workplace-centered instruction and worker-centered instruction started to blur. Most programs tended toward the middle, having become more sensitive to the worker, yet balancing the exigencies of the workplace (Gillespie, 1996; Grognet, 1995). Workplace ESL teachers had many roles to play and were accountable to many individuals and groups, among them the employers, the learners, and multiple funding sources. Frameworks developed by educators to describe the roles of workplace instructors demonstrate this complexity. Mansoor (1993) has created a detailed matrix illustrating the job duties, tasks, and subtasks, as well as knowledge, skills, attitudes, and other requirements for the workplace instructor. Lomperis (Jameson, 1997) has categorized her extensive framework around four steps needed to provide a workplace ESL program: marketing, planning, implementing, and evaluating.

What Linguistic Skills are Needed in the Workplace?

While there is comparatively a good deal of research on discourse in the K-12 classroom—teacher to student; student to teacher; student to student (see, for example, Goldenberg, 1991; Tharp & Gallimore, 1989)—there is very little on discourse patterns and style in the workplace. There has been research in England (Jupp & Davies, 1979; Garton-Sprenger, Jupp, Milne, & Prowse, 1980), and some work is currently going on in Australia (Candlin, 1995). In the United States, one linguist has looked at the sociolinguistic dimension of male/female communication in various milieux including the workplace (Tannen, 1986; 1990; 1997). However, there is no corpus of knowledge in the US that, through serious ethnographic research, charts worker to worker; worker to supervisor; supervisor to worker; or worker to manager communication in any occupational cluster.

Some educators (for example, Dow & Olson, 1995; Grognet, 1996; and Mrowicki, Lynch, & Locsin, 1990) have posited that a number of competencies do cut across occupational domains such as manufacturing, technical, service, and agricultural areas.

The following competencies, adapted from the sources above, can be classified as those that help the learner get a job, survive on the job, and thrive on the job. They are useful in any workplace setting.

To Get a Job

To get a job (other than through familial connections), second language learners need to be able to orally give personal information; express ability; express likes and dislikes; and answer and ask questions. They might also need literacy skills such as reading a want ad and completing an application form.

To Survive on a Job

To survive on a job, second language learners need to follow oral and written directions; understand and use safety language; ask for clarification; make small talk; and request reasons. If there are any manuals and job aids involved, they need to locate written information; find facts or specifications in text materials; determine the meaning of technical vocabulary and those enabling words attached to them like twist, stir, and pour; and cross-reference text information with charts, diagrams, and illustrations.

To Thrive on a Job

To thrive on a job and have job mobility, second language learners need to be able to participate in group discussions; give, as well as follow directions; teach others; hypothesize; predict outcomes; state a position; express an opinion; negotiate; interrupt; and take turns. On a literacy level, knowing how to access and use written information from diverse sources is essential.

What Workplace Skills are Needed?

In 1992, the SCANS Commission (Secretary [of Labor]'s Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills) issued a major report (U.S. Department of Labor, 1991). In the report, a group of business and education leaders identified five workplace competencies and three foundation skills needed for solid workplace performance. The assumption of the group was that all workers—whether native or non-native speakers of English, high school dropouts or PhD candidates—need to have these skills.

The skills and competencies were enumerated with the contexts in which they should be taught. Briefly, the five systems identified as workplace competencies are:

1. *Resource Management:* identifying, organizing, planning, and allocating resources. At all work levels, this includes resources of time (e.g., following a schedule); financial resources (e.g., making a budget); material and facility resources (e.g., knowing how much cleanser to use); and at a team or supervisory level, management of human resources (e.g., being able to meet both staffing needs and individual preferences).

2. *Information Management:* acquiring and applying necessary information routinely in job performance. This includes identifying, assimilating, and integrating necessary information (e.g., from a manual as well as from one's supervisor or coworker); preparing, interpreting and maintaining qualitative records and information (e.g., noting standards have been met on an assembly line or keeping records in an insurance company); converting information to other forms (e.g., from charts to written form or vice versa); interpreting and communicating information to others (e.g., taking a telephone message); employing computers and other technologies for input; and entering and retrieving data (e.g., managing and monitoring robots on an assembly line).
3. *Social Interaction:* participating as a team member; teaching others new skills; serving clients and customers; influencing individuals or groups; questioning the status quo; negotiating to arrive at a decision; and working in culturally diverse environments.
4. *Systems Behavior and Performance Skills:* understanding how social, organizational, and technical systems work and how to function effectively within them; anticipating and identifying consequences; and monitoring and correcting performance.
5. *Technology Utilization:* selecting appropriate technology; and using machines to monitor or perform tasks.

The SCANS Commission listed three enabling or foundation skills workers need to be able to perform the five workplace competencies:

1. *Basic Skills:* reading, writing, listening, speaking and mathematics (with the recognition that *linguistic* skills in English are essential to the accomplishment of all the functional skills).
2. *Higher Order Intellectual Skills:* reasoning, creative thinking, decision making, problem solving, representing information, learning to learn.
3. *Motivational or Character Traits:* maturity, responsibility, sociability, and self-esteem.

Perhaps because of its timing—the report was released just before the Clinton administration took over from the Bush administration—the SCANS report received little attention when it came out. That began to change, however, when the composition of the U.S. Congress changed in 1994, and there are now indications that employment readiness skills are beginning to receive more attention in the adult ESL classroom. Professional ESL newsletters and journals are starting to publish articles on SCANS (see, for example, Jameson, 1996; Mingkwan, 1996). At the 1997 annual convention of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) in Orlando, there were several presentations on the theme of integrating SCANS skills and competencies into the adult ESL curriculum. Further, a competency-based learner assessment system that is frequently used to satisfy funders' requirements for the adult ESL literacy program evaluation—the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS)—has correlated its life skills competencies to the SCANS foundation skills and workplace competencies (CASAS, 1996).

How Can ESL Practitioners Teach the SCANS Skills?

Adult ESL instructors are often part-time employees who have limited interaction with colleagues, few opportunities for professional development, and little compensation for lesson planning time (Crandall, 1994). They frequently have learners with diverse needs and purposes for studying English (Weddel & Van Duzer, 1997). How can instructors tie their adult ESL classes to employment preparation while meeting learners' needs and curriculum goals? Brigitte Marshall, an educator in California, talks about infusing the general ESL curriculum with "workplace know-how" (Marshall, 1997, p. 1) through classroom management techniques, grouping tactics, and instructional involvement strategies that require learners to "make decisions collaboratively, solve problems, think creatively, and exercise responsibility as called for in the SCANS report" (p. 2). Gaer (1996), Jameson (1996), and Mingkwan (1996) give specific suggestions on how to integrate employment preparation with language learning. Their ideas are summarized and adapted below:

- Listen to the learners. Get a sense of what they want and need to learn.
- Identify relevant SCANS skills and competencies to be practiced in each lesson. Tell learners that they are, for example, gathering, organizing, and summarizing information and that these are skills needed at the workplace.
- Add related project-like activities to the unit being taught. The project context will enable the class to utilize many of the foundation skills as well as the workplace competencies. For example, in a unit on accessing community services, learners can write letters, conduct interviews, or invite guest speakers from local agencies such as the fire department, police department, or the public library. Learners should do as much of the project planning as possible. If persons are interviewed, learners can write the interview questions and summarize the findings. Then, the class should develop some sort of product from the activity (e.g., a booklet or chart that summarizes what they have learned about accessing services in their community). Point out to the learners that they are using language and skills needed at the workplace. For example, they are managing information (gathering, organizing, and summarizing information from a variety of sources), working as a team, and making decisions. To demonstrate how these skills transfer from one task to another, ask learners to give examples of other situations (on the job or in family life) that require similar skills and language. For project ideas, the extension or expansion activities in the teacher's guide from the program text or the curriculum may provide ideas.

What Else Should ESL Practitioners Do?

In order to be facilitators for adult learners, ESL teachers must understand how the workplace community thinks and talks. For that reason, educators need to listen to what business and labor are saying and doing, and look at how they are saying and doing it, and then talk with them. Current U.S. policy, coupled with the knowledge that the workforce of the future will require high-level communication skills, may be forces that make ESL practitioners look at their own discipline in order to make some radical changes in methodology for the workplace.

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ERIC/NCLE and PAIE Digests are available free of charge from the National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education, 4646 40th Street NW, Washington, DC 20016; (202)362-0700, ext. 200; e-mail: ncle@cal.org. World Wide Web: www.cal.org/ncle.

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UNIQUE IN ITS CLASS...

BEST™

THE BASIC ENGLISH SKILLS TEST

48

CAL

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www.cal.org

What is the BEST?

The Basic English Skills Test, developed by language testing professionals at the Center for Applied Linguistics, is a unique measurement tool designed for adult immigrants and refugees, to measure basic functional language skills.

Who should use the BEST?

All types of programs servicing adult English language learners:

- Adult ESL
- Adult Basic Education
- Refugee and Immigrant Training
- Pre-vocational ESOL Training

What does BEST measure?

The ORAL INTERVIEW section measures:

- Communication
- Fluency
- Listening Comprehension
- Pronunciation

The LITERACY SKILLS section measures:

- Reading
- Writing

These sections can be tailored to suit a specific need, and can be used together or separately.

How can the BEST be used in my program?

Your program may use the BEST in a variety of ways:

PLACEMENT: to evaluate a student's proficiency on entry into an English language training course.

PROGRESS: to determine the progress of students in developing functional English language proficiency.

DIAGNOSIS: to provide diagnosis feedback to be used for overall course construction or individual remedial instruction.

SCREENING: to determine whether a student has sufficient English language skills to begin an English-medium vocational training course.

PROGRAM: to demonstrate the effectiveness of an instructional program when used as a pre- and

EVALUATION: post-measure.

Additional BEST *Resources:*

BASIC ENGLISH SKILLS TEST TRAINING VIDEO AND GUIDE

Originally developed at Clackamas Community College, these materials were used to train Oregon teachers to administer and score the BEST Short Form. The materials consist of a video and a pair of manuals. The **BEST Short Form** is a 5-7 minute subset of BEST test questions that may be used only as a quick in-house oral placement procedure. It requires complete familiarity with the standard BEST and uses the Picture Cue Book for Form B. *It is not appropriate for higher stakes assessment such as that required by the NRS.*

How the Training Works:
The **Training Video**, which runs for approximately one hour, leads BEST administrators through the BEST, instructing them in how to conduct and score interviews. The video includes information on the history of the BEST materials, scoring, test administration, and student performance levels. The video also includes one practice interview with scoring commentary and five complete interviews without commentary for rating practice.

Two written guides are included with the video. The **Video Training Guide** includes instructions on how to complete the video training, scoring sheets, answer keys, notes on scoring individual items, and a guide to Student Performance Levels (SPLs). The **Facilitator's Guide** provides trainers with an outline of training activities, as well as transparency masters, to form the foundation of a BEST training course.

Using the Materials:
Since the Short Form is a collection of items from the original BEST, these materials will be useful to all who administer any form of the BEST. The materials may be used for self-study or as part of a training course. These materials are intended to supplement, not replace the BEST Test Manual. In order to gain proficiency in administering and scoring the BEST, teachers should, in addition to completing the video training, read the Test Manual thoroughly and practice giving the BEST Oral Interview.

The Training Video and Guides can be ordered using the order form on the back of this brochure; by phone at 202-362-0700 or fax at 202-362-3740; or via email to laurel@cal.org.

BEST TRAINING WORKSHOPS

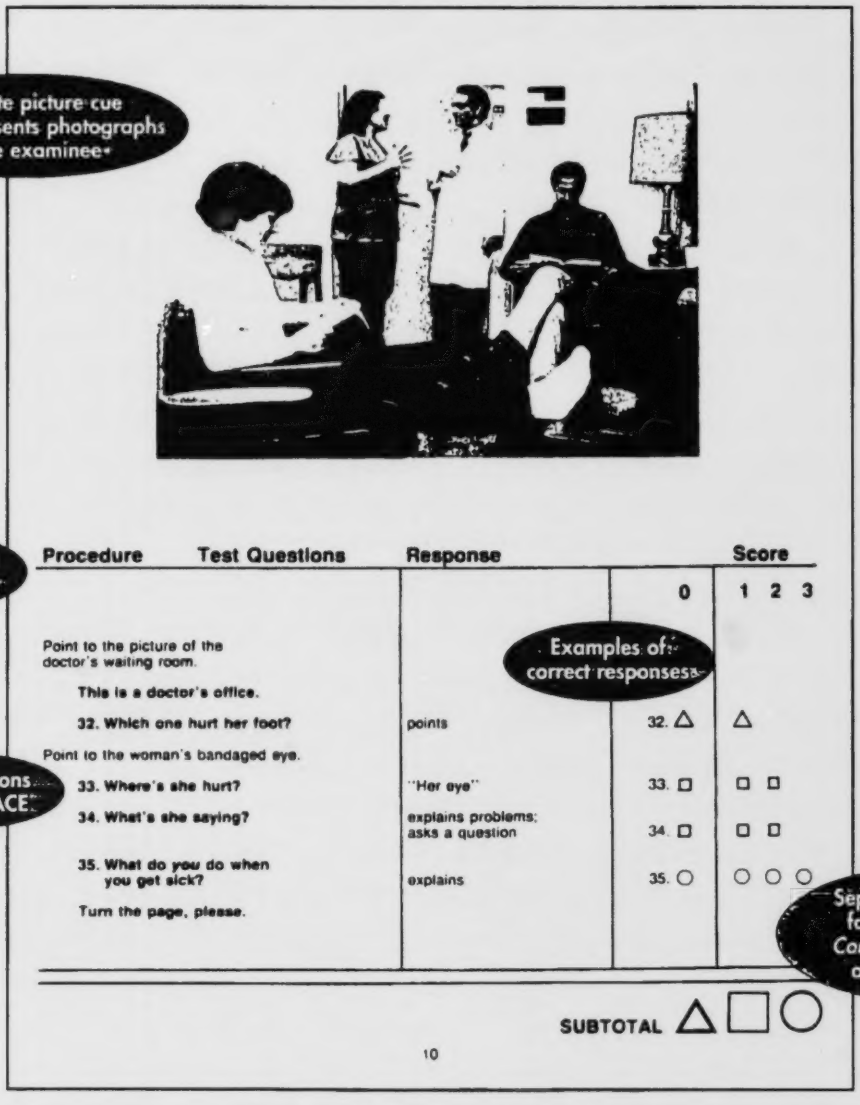
CAL staff is also available to conduct **BEST Training Workshops**. For information, please contact CAL at 202-362-0700, or check the box on the order form.

ORAL INTERVIEW SECTION

The Oral Interview Section is an **individually administered, face-to-face interview** requiring approximately **15 minutes** per examinee. It consists of a series of **simulated real-life listening comprehension and speaking tasks**. Tasks include:

- Telling time
- Asking for directions
- Following directions
- Counting money to buy items
- Verifying change
- Conversing socially

Elementary reading and writing tasks are also included in this section; together they may serve as a screening device to identify examinees for whom the **Literacy Skills Section** may be appropriate.



Sample page from the Interviewer's Booklet

LITERACY SKILLS SECTION

The Literacy Skills Section may be administered
in one hour either **individually** or to **groups**.

Reading tasks include:
- Dates on a calendar
- Labels on food and clothing
- Bulletin announcements
- Newspaper want ads

Writing tasks include:
- Addressing an envelope
- Writing a rent check
- Filling out an application form
- Writing a short biographical passage

Test manual gives complete scoring instructions

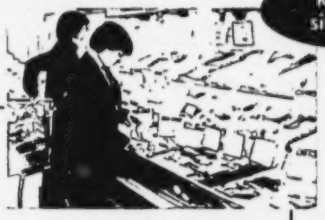
Real-life situations

Clear examples for the examinee

Scoring may be done on separate scoring sheets

PART 3

Write the answers.

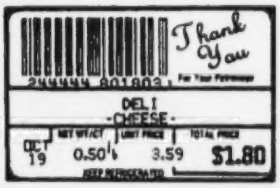


EXAMPLE:

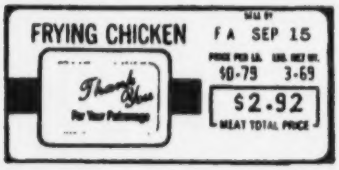
How much does this package cost? $1.94

How much does it cost per pound? $.99

1. How much does this package cost? _____



2. How much does this package cost? _____



3. How much is this a pound? _____

4

Sample page from the Literacy Skills Test Booklet

How to order the BEST for your classes:

The BEST (Forms B and C) are now available as complete kits for new users or in separate sections for those already using either form of the test. Each complete kit includes all materials necessary to test up to 100 examinees in two simultaneous administrations of the Oral Interview Section and materials for administering the Literacy Skills Section to 20 examinees. Each complete test kit costs $150.00 and contains:

(1) Test Manual

(2) Picture Cue Books (Oral Interview Section)

(15) Interviewer's Booklets (Oral Interview Section)

(100) Scoring Sheets (Oral Interview Section)

(20) Test Booklets (Literacy Skills Section)

(20) Scoring Sheets (Literacy Skills Section)

(1) BEST Short Form and Instructions. This is a 5-7 minute subset of BEST test questions that may be used only as a quick in-house oral placement procedure, not for high-stakes assessment as required by the NRS. It uses the Picture Cue Book for Form B.

The above materials may also be ordered separately (prices on the order form on the back). Please mark clearly which Form (B or C) you are ordering. If necessary, sample portions are available for inspection by marking the appropriate line on the order form.

BEST (Basic English Skills Test) **Order Form**

Ship to _____ **Bill to** _____

QUANTITY		ITEM	UNIT PRICE	TOTAL PRICE
		Test Sample (retired form)	no charge	
		BEST Training Video and Guide	$50.00	
Form B	Form C			
		Complete BEST Test Kit	$150.00	
		Separate Order Materials (Qtys.)		
		Test Manual (1)	$25.00	
		Picture Cue Book (1)	$12.00	
		Interviewer's Booklet (5)	$13.00	
		Interview Scoring Sheets (100)	$30.00	
		Literacy Skills Testing Pkg. (1) *Literacy Skills Test Booklets (20)* *Literacy Skills Scoring Sheets (20)*	$45.00	
			SUBTOTAL:	
			TOTAL:	

NOTE: All orders U.S. rency. Materials wil shipped U.P.S. with days of receipt of o Rush orders at the requ the purchaser may additional shipping cha For orders from ou North America, the fo ing shipping fees a U.S. $40.00 for orde $100.00 or more, $20.00 for orders of than $100. Actual fo delivery may depend o efficiency of the local p service.

☐ For more informa on BEST Training Workshops pleas check here.

Make checks payable to: **CAL/BEST**
(F.I.N. 52-0807619)

Return this form to:
BASIC ENGLISH SKILLS TEST
CENTER FOR APPLIED LINGUISTICS
4646 40th ST, NW
WASHINGTON, DC 20016-1859

Acknowledging that the ultimate responsibility for test use lies with the user, we agree to:

1. Evaluate carefully all the information in the Test Manual.
2. Use the test only for appropriate purposes and with examinees for whom it is appropriate,
3. Follow exactly all administration and scoring specifications,
4. Follow sound professional practice in discussing and releasing scores,
5. Store testing materials in a secure place,
6. Not duplicate in any manner any test items, answer sheets, or manuals without obtaining permission from the publisher.

_____
Signature of official placing this order

_____
Date

_____
Title

_____
Telephone (include area code)

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District of Columbia residents add 5.75% tax to subtotal.
Florida residents add 6.00%.

Shipping: Orders $20 and under, add $2.00.
Orders under $300, add 10%.
Orders over $300, add 5%.
International orders: add 20%.

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BEST Plus™

A computer-assisted assessment of oral English proficiency
with a parallel print-based assessment

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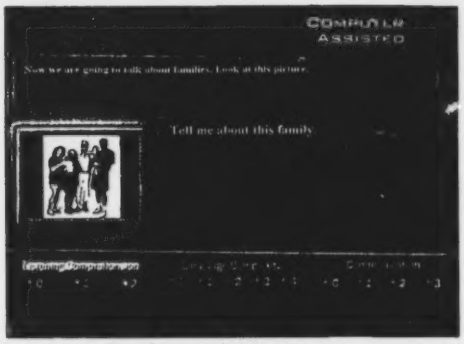


Sample test administrator screen.

The Center for Applied Linguistics announces the *BEST Plus*, the newest addition to our distinguished line of language testing products. The *BEST Plus* is based on the Basic English Skills Test (BEST) oral interview. The *BEST* was developed during the early 1980s to meet the need for reliable assessment of adult English learners' oral proficiency and literacy skills. It employs a task-based, guided interview scored on the spot by a trained test administrator.

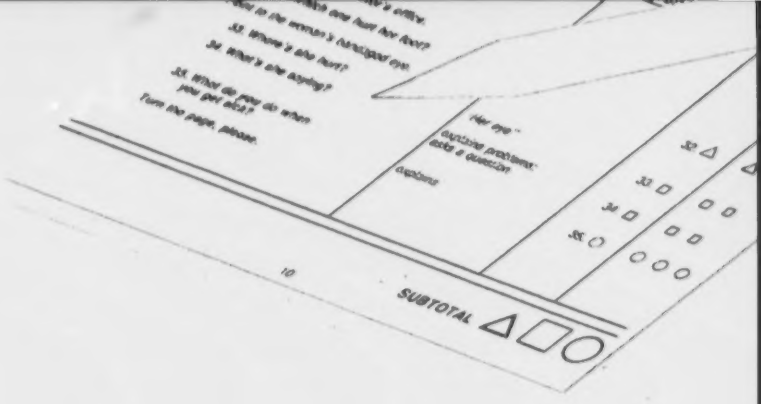
The *BEST Plus* is a precise, updated, and flexible English language skills assessment tool to use with adult speakers of languages other than English. CD and print-based versions will be available early in 2003, along with test administration instructions and test administrator training materials.

The *BEST Plus* offers a number of advantages to users. Among them are:

- Each adult's oral English skills are assessed precisely.
- Test items assess adults' English proficiency in personal, community, and occupational domains of language use.
- Language abilities assessed range from providing personal information to giving and supporting opinions.
- In the CD version, computer software adapts test items to examinees' skill levels and delivers test items at appropriate levels.
- In the print-based version, a quick placer test determines the appropriate test items for the examinee.
- Scores on the assessment will be correlated with the Student Performance Levels (SPLs) and the National Reporting System (NRS) levels.
- Adults' English language proficiency can be assessed at the highest levels of the NRS.

Programs that need to measure adult learners' English speaking skills for placement or accountability will find the BEST Plus to be a reliable, easy-to-use assessment tool.

This project is funded by the Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE), U.S. Department of Education, Contract # ED-00-CO-0130.



What proficiency levels will the BEST Plus assess?

The *BEST Plus* will be able to distinguish performance over the full range of English proficiency levels represented in adult education programs from NRS beginning ESL literacy to High Advanced ESL, measuring progress over time. Each time the CD version is administered to the same examinee (e.g., for pre-and post-testing) it will generate a different set of test questions.

How is the BEST Plus different from the BEST?

The *BEST Plus* takes less time to measure oral language proficiency in English than the original *BEST*. The *BEST Plus* will continue to be administered as a face-to-face oral interview. In the CD version, the test administrator enters the scores into the computer. The computer selects the next question, continuing to adapt the difficulty of the questions according to the examinee's performance. In the print-based version, the placer test helps the examiner choose test items that most efficiently define the functioning level of the examinee.

How long will the test take?

Each oral interview will take approximately 10 minutes.

What type of language is assessed?

- Language from personal, community, and occupational domains
- Real-life communication tasks such as providing personal information, describing situations, and giving and supporting an opinion

How are examinee responses scored?

Based on current research in second language oral proficiency assessment, examinee responses are scored for:

- Listening comprehension — How well did the examinee understand the question?
- Language complexity — How complex was the language — from words and phrases to organized ideas?
- Communication — How well did the examinee communicate meaning?

What is included in the BEST Plus test packet?

- The test on CD or in print
- Scoring rubrics
- Scoring sheets for the print-based version
- Examples of score reports
- Test manual with technical information and administration guidelines

How will test administrators be trained?

Training will include:

- Video examples of the test as it is administered to adult English learners.
- Scoring exercises, with explanations of why learner language is scored at a given level on the scoring rubrics.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The **Best Plus** will be available in 2003.

For more information or to request that your name be added to our mailing list, send e-mail to **BEST-Plus@cal.org**, or write to Stephanie Stauffer, Best Plus Coordinator, CAL, 4646 40th Street NW, Washington, DC 20016

For project updates you may also check our web site, **www.best-plus.net**.

For information about the current BEST, please contact Laurel Winston at (202)362-0700 or send e-mail to **laurel@cal.org**. Information is also available on the BEST web page at **www.cal.org/best**.

Shop for CAL testing products online 24 hours a day at the CALStore **www.cal.org/store**.

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Appendix E

NSCERC, ASA & CAL
Collaborative Project

Summary of Meeting

May 2, 2002
1:00 pm –3:45 pm
Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL)

Those in attendance were:

Carmelita Tursi- ASA
Joy Peyton-CAL
Lynda Terrill-CAL
Miriam Burt-CAL
MaryAnn Cunningham-Florez-CAL
Tony Sarmiento-NSCERC
Valdes Snipes-Bennett -NSCERC

Discussions:

1. **A debriefing on the Jacksonville conference relating to the panel on "Responding to the Growing Diversity of Language and Culture Among Seniors" and the two workshops lead by CAL and ASA took place.**

   ⇒ Everyone felt very good about the general session and really enjoyed Greta Peters' presentation. Her pictures of the Somali Seniors were the highlight.

   ⇒ Miriam had some concerns on the low attendance during the ESL workshop. Despite the low numbers, the workshop was very informative, and participants were interested in the topic.

   ⇒ Carmelita felt good about her workshop.

2. **ASA and CAL gave an overview on their visits to East Side Neighborhood Services (ESNS), Minneapolis, MN and provided information on what the next steps would be relating to ESNS.**

   ⇒ **ASA:**

   Carmelita and Valdes went to Minneapolis on March 4-5, 2002. Interviews were conducted with the Director of Senior Programs, the Associate Director, the Director of Community/Family Programs, the Executive Director, a Board Member, the Senior Aides Project Director and the Director of Human Resources.

   On-site visits were made to Luxton Park and Somali Community of Minnesota. Somali Senior Aides were interviewed.

BEST COPY AVA

Immediately following the trip to Minneapolis, Carmelita coordinated with Greta Peters to distribute a questionnaire to all employees, Senior Aides and Board Members of East Side Neighborhood Services. A good number of the questionnaires have been return to Carmelita. The questionnaires are in the process of being tallied and analyzed.

ASA has contracted with a person from the University of Minneapolis to interview ESNS support staff.

Next steps: Carmelita will write a report on the findings and make recommendations for future interactions with ESNS.

⇒ **CAL:**

Miriam Burt and Lynda Terrill meet with Greta Peters in Minneapolis, MN on March 27-28. Interviews were conducted with five ESNS staff, the Senior Aides Project Director, the Director of Senior Programs, the Director of Community/Family Programs, a Job counselor and an Employment specialist/Translator. Miriam and Lynda also conducted two focus groups of Somali Senior Aides.

On-site visits were made to Luxton Center, the Somali Community of Minnesota, and Ubah, where Miriam and Lynda observed ESL classes and interviewed staff. At Eastside, Miriam and Lynda gave a presentation on "Best Practices in working with Adult English Language Learners" during a brown bag luncheon.

Next Steps: Miriam will write an interim report to be submitted to NSCERC. Whether or not CAL will make a second visit to ESNS has not yet been decided. Miriam Burt will follow-up with Greta Peters to discuss that.

3. **A discussion was held regarding other tasks to be completed by June 30, 2002**

⇒ Chinatown, NY-Project Director Jennifer Lo

Carmelita, MaryAnn, and Valdes will visit Jennifer Lo-Chinatown, NY May 21-22. A conference call has been set to discuss the visit on May 7, @ 3:00 pm EST.

Valdes, working with Jodie Fine, will notify the Executive Director of the Chinatown project for approval of the visit.

⇒ BEST Training

We agreed that the BEST training is something that we need to do. CAL is available to do this two-day training any time between June 12-19. There are three options that NSCERC will decide on by May 10, 2002:

1) To hold the BEST Training in Minneapolis, MN and invite project directors from St. Paul, MN and Eau Claire WI.
2) To hold the BEST Training in Minneapolis, MN and invite 12-20 project directors for the training.
3) To hold the BEST Training here in DC/Maryland at CAL or NSCERC and invite 12-20 project directors for the training.

We would like following states to be represented at the training: AL, CA, CT, FL, IL, MA, MD, MI, MN, NC, NJ, NY, OH, PA, TN, TX, WI

4. **The next Collaborative Project Meeting will be May 23, 2002, 9:00 - 11:00 am at CAL.**

Appendix F

May 28, 2002

Jennifer Lo
Director, Senior Aides Program
Chinese-American Planning Council
55 Avenue of the Americas
Suite 508
New York, NY 10013

Dear Jennifer:

I wanted to thank you, CPC staff, and the senior aides for your hospitality and helpfulness during my site visit this past week. I really enjoyed speaking with all of you and observing the English classes that you offer the Senior Aides. I feel that I have a much richer picture of the overall program and the English classes as a result.

I was impressed by the commitment and enthusiasm of all involved with the senior aides and the English classes. In talking with and observing the aides, I found that they are engaged and motivated learners. Both they and the program staff with whom I talked described how important these classes are in meeting Seniors' personal and program goals. The teachers were experienced with this learner population and they seemed flexible in trying to meet the needs expressed by the Seniors in the classes. They also described their desire to make each class an environment where the Seniors felt free to ask questions and participate actively in discussions and communicative activities.

There were some points where I thought the teachers could use some additional support and development, or where they themselves expressed interest or concern. I have included some publications from NCLE (3 copies each, but feel free to duplicate as necessary) that might be of help to them in these areas. I have included publications that address the following points:

1. *Needs assessment*: Jen indicated that she likes to ask the senior aides many questions in the initial days of classes, to determine their needs and goals as well as their English proficiencies and experience. I have included a publication that offers ideas for developing more structured ways of doing this throughout the course. I think both Jen and Anne Marie would find this an informative tool for planning and implementing instruction that will be more structured in terms of content and goals, while still accommodating the needs of the Seniors.

2. *Ongoing learner assessment*: Learner assessment is sometimes a tough issue to tackle. I know both teachers voiced concerns about creating additional stress for the learners by incorporating assessment. However, assessment is a valuable element of instruction, contributing to learner self-awareness, ongoing development of curriculum

and instruction, and program evaluation. I would urge both teachers to look over the materials included here on assessment (and our resource collection on assessment at http://www.cal.org/ncle/RescAEv.htm) and investigate some of the assessment options that might work for their learners and classes.

3. *Using communicative activities*: Both teachers indicated that their learners are very enthusiastic when they have the opportunity to communicate openly and actively in class. I have included four articles that address language skills development, as well as pronunciation, and using active, communicative ideas for lessons and activities. I have also added an article on project-based learning, which discusses language and skills development through project work.

4. *Working with multilevel classes*: As is common in adult ESL classes, the teachers indicated and I observed there are differences in the English language skills of learners in the same class. Our digest on working with multilevel learners may offer some good suggestions for dealing with this issue. (I also added our article on working with beginning-level learners, too.)

5. *Integrating employment skills:* Given the nature of the senior aides program, and the learners' expressed interest in learning English and cultural conventions related to employment, I have put in a copy of an article dealing with the integration of employment skills with ESL instruction.

6. *Additional training and resources:* I would urge both teachers to take some time and visit our Web site at http://www.cal.org/ncle to search for information and resources. In addition to full-text versions of our publications, there are also resource collections on specific topics, annotated bibliographies, frequently asked questions (and answers), and links to other sources of adult ESL information including curricula and lesson plans. Also, tapping into the local resources and training opportunities at the Literacy Assistance Center (32 Broadway, 10th fl., New York, NY 10004; Phone: (212) 803-3300; Fax:(212) 785-3685; http://www.lacnyc.org) would be very beneficial.

Regarding your interests in program evaluation and assessment, I have added several publications on these topics, including some annotated bibliographies of materials in the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) database (you can see the enclosed brochure for more information on that resource). There is also an article on evaluation of workplace programs that has some general principles and ideas that might be useful. I would also urge you to visit our Web site, particularly our resource collection on assessment and evaluation (http://www.cal.org/ncle/RESAEv.htm).

I hope this information will be of help to you and your teachers. Please feel free to contact me (202/362-0700, x226; maryann@cal.org) or Miriam Burt (202/362-0700, x256; miriam@cal.org) at any time if you have questions. I would be happy to speak with you. We at the Center for Applied Linguistics look forward to continuing to work with the Senior Aides Program at the Chinese-American Planning Council.

Thanks again!

All the best,

MaryAnn Florez
Assistant Director
National Center for ESL Literacy Education (NCLE)
Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL)
4646 40th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20016
Tel: 202/362-0700, 226
Fax: 202/363-7204
Email: maryann@cal.org

cc: Miriam Burt

Sent to Jennifer 5/24/02

Order Form

NCLE Publications

Digests and Q&As

- [x] Adult ESL Learner Assessment: Purposes and Tools 3
- [ ] Adult ESL Learners: Learning from the Australian Perspective
- [ ] The Adult ESL Teaching Profession
- [ ] Adult Literacy Practitioners as Researchers
- [ ] Assessing Workplace Performance Problems: A Checklist
- [ ] Beginning to Work With Adult English Language Learners: Some Considerations
- [ ] Citizenship Preparation for Adult ESL Learners
- [ ] Civics Education for Adult English Language Learners
- [ ] Critical Literacy for Adult English Language Learners
- [ ] Cross-Cultural Issues in Adult ESL Literacy Classrooms
- [ ] Current Concepts and Terms in Adult ESL
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- [ ] ESL Literacy for a Linguistic Minority: The Deaf Experience
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- [x] Improving ESL Learners' Listening Skills: At the Workplace and Beyond 3
- [x] Improving ESL Learners' Writing Skills 3
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- [x] Teaching Low-Level Adult ESL Learners 3
- [x] Teaching Multilevel Adult ESL Classes 3
- [ ] Transitioning Adult ESL Learners to Academic Programs
- [ ] Trauma and the Adult English Language Learner
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- [ ] Valuing Diversity in the Multicultural Classroom

Annotated Bibliographies

- [ ] Citizenship Education for Immigrants
- [ ] Civics Education for English Language Learners
- [ ] Content Standards for Adult ESL
- [x] Curriculum Guides for Adult ESL Literacy Programs 3
- [ ] ESL Instruction in the Health Care Settings
- [ ] ESL Instruction in the Hospitality Industry
- [ ] ESL Literacy and Labor Education
- [x] Evaluation of Adult ESL Programs 1
- [ ] Evaluation of Workplace ESL Programs
- [ ] Family ESL Literacy Curriculum Guides
- [ ] Family ESL Programs
- [ ] Health Literacy for Adult English Language Learners
- [ ] Learning Disabilities and Adult English Language Learners
- [ ] Multilevel Materials for Adult ESL Instruction
- [ ] Native Language Literacy
- [ ] Program Standards for Adult ESL
- [ ] Reading for Adults Learning English as a Second Language
- [ ] Women and ESL Literacy
- [ ] Workplace ESL Instruction and Programs
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- [ ] Writing Instruction in Adult ESL

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BEST COPY AVAILABLE

TENTATIVE AGENDA

Tuesday, May 21, 2002

9:00 am – 10:00 am	Interview with Project Director Jennifer LO
11:00 am-12:00 noon	Interview Director of the Senior Center
12:00am 1:00 pm	Lunch & Travel to 150 Elizabeth Street
1:00 pm -2:00 pm	Interview Chi Loek Assistant Executive Director Steven Yip
2:00 pm –3:10 pm	Interview with Executive Director David Chen
3:10 pm- 4: 00 pm	Walk back to 55 Avenue of the Americas
4:00 pm- 5:00 pm	Interview support staff-Carmelita Tursi Interview with Jennifer Lo- MaryAnn Florez

Wednesday, May 22, 2002

9:00 am	Meet in Senior AIDES Program Office
9:30 am –10:00 am 10:00 – 10:30am	Host Agency Visit- CPC Home Health Agency Interview with Program staff
10:30 am- 11:00 am	Interview with ESL Instructor (1) Anne Marie Deluca
11:00 am-11:30 am	Interview ESL Students
11:30 am 12:00 noon	Observe Class 1 (Anne Marie teaches)
12:00 noon –1:00 pm	Lunch
~~1:00 pm – 2:00 pm~~ 1:00 – 1:30	~~Interview Program Staff~~ e
~~2:00 pm- 2:30 pm~~ 1:30 – 2:00pm	Interview ESL Instructor (2) Jan
~~2:30 pm- 3:30 pm~~ 2:00 – 2:30pm	Observe Class 2 Debrief with instructors
~~3:30~~	Travel back to DC/Maryland

Teacher Interview

Name: _____

ESL Class: _____

Organization/Site: _____

Interviewer: MaryAnn Florez

Date: _____

1. Do you have training/experience in teaching adults? In teaching ESL? Describe.

2. How long have you been working with the senior aides as a teacher? In another role?

3. What language skills do you think the senior aides need, particularly to be successful on the job? What other areas of need do you see?

4. What are your overall approach and objectives for this class?

5. Describe a moment in class when you felt that the seniors were most engaged in what was happening in class. Describe a moment when you were most engaged. Were they at the same time?

6. Describe a moment in class when you felt that the seniors were most disconnected from what was happening in class. Describe a moment when you were most disconnected. Were they at the same time?

7. What statement, action, or reaction on the part of a senior aide has been the most helpful to you in your teaching in this class? The most puzzling?

8. What about the class so far has confirmed an expectation or suspicion that you had prior to the start of teaching ESL? What has surprised you?

9. Name one thing that is happening in class that you would like to see continue. Name one thing that is happening in class that you would like to change.

M. Florez
NSCERC Project
May 21-22, 2002

Program Staff Interview

Name: _____

Title/Position: _____

Organization/Site: _____

Interviewer: MaryAnn Florez

Date: _____

1. Do you interact with the senior aides? How? How often?

2. Have any language and communications concerns emerged as you have worked with the senior aides? Any other concerns?

3. What language skills do you think they need to have to be successful on the job? (What do you wish their ESL classes would teach them?)

4. Do you have any questions or other comments for us?

adapted from M. Burt and L. Terrill
NSCERC Project
May 21-22, 2002 (MCF)

Appendix 67

Collaborative Project: Linguistically Diverse Seniors

Senior AIDES Program (NSCERC)
American Society on Aging (ASA)
Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL)

Center for Applied Linguistics
1:00-3:00 p.m.
May 2, 2002

Agenda

Introductions

Objectives

Debriefing Jacksonville conference

Summary of

Senior Aides Program annual conference (Tony and Valdes)
panel discussion (Carmelita, Valdes, Miriam, and MaryAnn)
culture workshop (Carmelita)
ESL workshop (Miriam and MaryAnn)

Outcomes

Next steps for:

Senior AIDES Program/NSCERC:

ASA:

CAL: Provide technical assistance related to teaching adult English language learners for ESNS in Minneapolis?

Schedules/Meetings

Appendix G

5/23/02

Assessing and Facilitating Progress in Senior Aides Learning English

Senior Aides within NSCERC face many challenges as they strive to reach and maintain dignified self-sufficiency. Immigrant Senior Aides often face the added challenge of needing to learn English and American work culture within a short time. For initial assessment and to quantify and qualify learner progress in English, programs may find the Best English Skills Test (BEST) a useful tool.

BEST was developed in the early 1980s by the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL), one of NSCERC's partners in the Senior Aide project. BEST includes an individually administered oral interview that measures communication skills and a literacy skills section that measures reading and writing. These tests are used by adult English-as-a-second-language (ESL) programs across the country.

Initial assessment and intake can help determine English class placement and point to appropriate directions for English language learning by answering the following questions:

> How much English does this person know? How well does he understand what he hears? How much can he say? Can he read and write in English? Can he read and write in his native language? How many years of education does he have in his native country?

The BEST can also help determine job placement for the Senior Aides and to predict when the Aide has learned English well enough to be successful in un-subsidized employment by answering these questions:

> What skills will the Aide need before she can be placed in a work environment? Should she be place in one where reading and writing in English (or the native language) are needed? Should she be placed in a job where she needs to use English?

To learn more about this process, come to Assessment and BEST Training at the Eastside Community Center in Minneapolis on Thursday, June 13, and Friday, June 14, 2002.

The agenda and objectives of the workshop are for NSCERC subcontractors are as follows:

Thursday, June 13, 1:00 – 5:00 p.m.

- **become familiar with best practices and resources in adult English as a Second Language**

- **recognize the importance of assessment of learners' language abilities**

Friday, June 14 , 9:00 – 4:00 p.m.

- **administer and score the BEST Oral Interview**
- **administer and score the BEST Literacy Skills assessment**
- **interpret BEST scores**

Who should attend?

English as a second language teachers, job counselors, program managers, and all persons interested in assessing Senior Aides' English ability and their progress in learning the language.

We hope to see you in Minneapolis next month!

Appendix II

CAL
CENTER FOR APPLIED LINGUISTICS
4646 40TH STREET NW • WASHINGTON DC 20016-1859 • (202) 362-0700 • fax (202) 362-3740 • www.cal.org

Assessing and Facilitating Progress in Senior Aides Learning English

Miriam Burt and Lynda Terrill
June 13 - 14, 2002
NSCERC Training
East Side Community Center
Minneapolis, Minnesota
miriam@cal.org
lterrill@cal.org

Objectives:

- become familiar with best practices and resources in adult English as a Second Language
- recognize the importance of assessment of learners' language abilities
- learn how to better assist Senior Aides in setting realistic short-term and long-term goals
- administer and score the BEST Oral Interview
- administer and score the BEST Literacy Skills assessment
- interpret BEST scores

Adult English Language Learners: Myths and Realities

Mark the following sentences as either true or false.

1. Adult English language learners are too old to learn another language well.

2. English language learners run the gamut from those who are not literate in their native language to those with post-graduate degrees from their home countries.

3. It takes two years for a foreign-born adult to learn English well.

4. The learning environment is very important for seniors; good lighting is desirable as is elimination of outside noise.

5. It is only necessary to assess learners at the beginning and at the end of a course of study.

6. Spiraling material in the classroom helps with short-term memory. However, learning by rote may not be successful, even though may seniors believe that drill and memorization is the way to learn a language.

7. It is necessary to correct every mistake the senior makes in grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary.

8. Adults can learn a language most efficiently in homogeneous settings where the teacher can translate everything into the native language.

9. Most seniors don't want to learn English.

10. In addition to assessing what the learner needs to know by talking to the host agencies to see what English is needed, teachers should also find out from the learners themselves what they need to use English for.

Miriam Burt and Lynda Terrill, NSCERC, Minneapolis, June 13, 2002

NCLE

A Resource for ESL Practitioners

Are you looking for information about how to start an ESL program? Would you like suggestions on how to work with a multilevel class? Do you need speakers or consultants for on-site technical assistance? Do you have a question about the pros and cons of standardized tests versus alternative assessment? Have you considered contacting NCLE?

What is NCLE?

NCLE—pronounced like the five-cent coin—is the National Center for ESL Literacy Education, located at the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL), a nonprofit organization in Washington, DC. NCLE focuses on literacy education for adults and out-of-school youth learning English as a second language. Our mission is to provide practitioners and others with timely information on adult ESL literacy education.

How does NCLE help practitioners?

NCLE provides information and referral services on questions regarding literacy education for adults learning English. Contact us with questions about populations, programs, instructional approaches, and resources.

NCLE offers free publications:

- Digests and Q&As—two- and four-page articles on a variety of current topics in adult ESL, including teaching strategies, civics education, assessment, finding resources on the Web, and family literacy
- Annotated Bibliographies of resource materials from the ERIC database
- *NCLEnotes*—NCLE's semiannual newsletter reporting on ESL literacy news and resources

NCLE staff are available for professional development activities, such as teacher institutes, workshops, program evaluations, and conference sessions.

NCLE staff facilitate the National Institute for Literacy's electronic listserv, NIFL-ESL, for those interested in online discussions about the field of adult ESL instruction.

NCLE collects, evaluates, and abstracts documents about adult ESL literacy and native language literacy education for the ERIC database.

Is NCLE on the World Wide Web?

NCLE's Web site offers 74 full-text ERIC Digests and Q&As, resource collections, FAQs, how to join the NIFL-ESL listserv, information about NCLE publications, and more. Visit NCLE at **http://www.cal.org/ncle**.

How can I contact NCLE?

NCLE's address is 4646 40th Street NW, Washington, DC 20016-1859. We can also be contacted by e-mail: ncle@cal.org; phone: 202-362-0700, extension 200; fax: 202-363-7204; and via our Web site.

NCLE is funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education.

National Center for ESL Literacy Education

NCLE Publications

Summer 2002

The National Center for ESL Literacy Education (NCLE) at the Center for Applied Linguistics provides timely and authoritative information about literacy education for adults learning English as a second language (ESL). NCLE's free publications are arranged below by subject, with the most recent titles first. The Digests (2 pages) and Q&As (4 pages) present overviews of current topics. The Annotated Bibliographies list journal articles and documents from the ERIC database. Single copies are free and may be duplicated. See ordering information inside.

What Works: ESL Methods and Approaches

Digests and Q&As

- English That Works: Preparing Adult English Language Learners for Success in the Workforce and Community (2002) **New!**
- Using Music in the Adult ESL Classroom (2001)
- Dialogue Journals: Interactive Writing to Develop Language and Literacy (Updated 2000)
- Finding and Evaluating Adult ESL Resources on the World Wide Web (2000)
- Critical Literacy for Adult English Language Learners (1999)
- Multiple Intelligences: Theory and Practice in Adult ESL (1999)
- Poetry in the Adult ESL Classroom (1999)
- Using Videos with Adult English Language Learners (1999)
- Current Concepts and Terms in Adult ESL (1998)
- Project-Based Learning for Adult English Language Learners (1998)
- Using Software in the Adult ESL Classroom (1998)
- Using the World Wide Web with Adult ESL Learners (1998)
- Numeracy in the Adult ESL Classroom (1996)
- Philosophies and Approaches in Adult ESL Literacy Instruction (1995)
- Teaching Low-Level Adult ESL Learners (1995)
- Teaching Multilevel Adult ESL Classes (1995)

Language and Culture

Digests and Q&As

- Myths About Language Diversity and Literacy in the United States (1997)
- Official English and English Plus: An Update (1997 ERIC/CLL)
- Social Identity and the Adult ESL Classroom (1997)

Annotated Bibliography

- Native Language Literacy (Updated 2000)

Improving Language Skills

Digests and Q&As

- Improving Adult English Language Learners' Speaking Skills (1999)
- Reading and the Adult English Language Learner (1999)
- Improving Adult ESL Learners' Pronunciation Skills (1998)
- Improving ESL Learners' Listening Skills: At the Workplace and Beyond (1997)
- Improving ESL Learners' Writing Skills (1997)

Annotated Bibliography

- Reading for Adults Learning English as a Second Language (2000)
- Writing Instruction in Adult ESL (1997)

Assessment and Evaluation

Digests and Q&As

- Issues in Accountability and Assessment for Adult ESL Instruction **New!** (2002)
- Needs Assessment for Adult ESL Learners (1997)
- Adult ESL Learner Assessment: Purposes and Tools (1995)
- Evaluating Workplace ESL Instructional Programs (1995)

Annotated Bibliographies

- Content Standards for Adult ESL **New!** (2002)
- Program Standards for Adult ESL **New!** (2002)
- Evaluation of Adult ESL Programs (1998)
- Evaluation of Workplace ESL Programs (1998)

Family and Intergenerational ESL Literacy

Digests and Q&As

- Family and Intergenerational Literacy in Multilingual Communities (1998)
- Using Multicultural Children's Literature in Adult ESL Classes (1998)
- Valuing Diversity in the Multicultural Classroom (1994)

Annotated Bibliographies

- Family ESL Programs (1999)
- Family ESL Literacy Curriculum Guides (1998)

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Specific Populations

Digests and Q&As

- ESL Instruction and Adults with Learning Disabilities (2000)
- Trauma and the Adult English Language Learner (2000)
- Mental Health and the Adult Refugee: The Role of the ESL Teacher (1999)
- Refugees as English Language Learners: Issues and Concerns (1999)
- ESL Literacy for a Linguistic Minority: The Deaf Experience (1992)

Annotated Bibliographies

- Literacy-Level ESL Learners (2002) **New!**
- Learning Disabilities and English Language Learners (2000)
- Women and ESL Literacy (1999)

Background and Policy Issues

Digests and Q&As

- ESL Instruction in Adult Education: Findings from a National Evaluation (1995)
- Estimating Literacy in the Multilingual United States: Issues and Concerns (1994)

Workplace and Vocational ESL

(See also *Assessment and Evaluation* and *Program Design*)

Digests and Q&As

- Integrating Employment Skills into Adult ESL Instruction (1997)
- Union-Sponsored Workplace ESL Instruction (1996)
- Selling Workplace ESL Instructional Programs (1995)

Annotated Bibliographies

- ESL Literacy and Labor Education (1998)
- Workplace ESL Instruction and Programs (1998)
- ESL Instruction in the Health Care Settings (1997)
- ESL Instruction in the Hospitality Industry (1997)
- Workplace ESL Literacy Guides and Curricula (1997)

Selected ERIC Digests, Q&As, and Annotated Bibliographies are available on the NCLE Web site at

www.cal.org/ncle

Staff Development

Digests and Q&As

- Beginning to Work With Adult English Language Learners: Some Considerations (2001)
- Reflective Teaching Practice in Adult ESL Settings (2001)
- Online Professional Development for Adult ESL Educators (2000)
- Trends in Staff Development for Adult ESL Instructors (1998)
- The Adult ESL Teaching Profession (1997)
- Using Volunteers as Aides in the Adult ESL Classroom (1997)
- Adult Literacy Practitioners as Researchers (1994)

Program Design

Digests and Q&As

- Health Literacy and Adult English Language Learners **New!** (2002)
- Library Literacy Programs for English Language Learners (2001)
- Civics Education for Adult English Language Learners (2000)
- Native Language Literacy and Adult ESL Instruction (1999)
- Adult ESL Learners: Learning from the Australian Perspective (1998)
- Citizenship Preparation for Adult ESL Learners (1997)
- Planning, Implementing, and Evaluating Workplace ESL Programs (1996)
- English as a Second Language in Volunteer-Based Programs (1995)
- Outreach and Retention in Adult ESL Literacy Programs (1995)
- Transitioning Adult ESL Learners to Academic Programs (1995)

Annotated Bibliographies

- Civics Education for English Language Learners (2001)
- Health Literacy for Adult English Language Learners (2001)
- Multilevel Materials for Adult ESL Instruction (2000)
- Citizenship Education for Immigrants (1999)
- Curriculum Guides for Adult ESL Literacy Programs (1998)

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- ❑ ***Family Literacy and Adult English Language Learners***
- ❑ ***Professional Development and Adult English Language Instruction***
- ❑ ***Uses of Technology in Adult ESL Education***

- ❑ ****A Research Agenda for Adult ESL*** (1998) Prepared by NCLE for The National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy with support from Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)

Issues in Vocational and Workplace ESL Instruction

- ❑ ***Learning to Work in a New Land: A Review and Sourcebook for Vocational and Workplace ESL*** by Marilyn K. Gillespie 165 pp. (1996) **Special!** $5.00
- ❑ ***The Vocational Classroom: A Great Place to Learn English*** by Elizabeth Platt 31 pp. (1996) $7.00
- ❑ ****Workplace ESL Instruction: Interviews from the Field*** by Miriam Burt 56 pp. (1997) $7.00

Issues in Adult ESL Literacy

- ❑ ***Literacy, Work, and Education Reform*** 17 pp. (1995) $5.00
- ❑ ***Native Language Literacy Instruction for Adults: Patterns, Issues, and Promises*** by Marilyn K. Gillespie 36 pp. (1994) $5.00

Other Priced Publications

- ❑ **Dialogue Journal Bibliography** 18 pp. (1999) $10.00
- ❑ **ERIC Search on ESL Curriculum Guides** (86 citations) (1999) $10.00
- ❑ **ERIC Search on Native Language Literacy** (75 citations) (1999) $10.00
- ❑ **ERIC Search on Workplace ESL Curricula and Guides** (77 citations) (1999) $10.00

* These publications and *A Research Agenda for Adult ESL* **in Spanish** are available on NCLE's Web site at **http://www.cal.org/ncle**.

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07/02

HEALTH LITERACY AND ADULT ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Kate Singleton, Fairfax County (Virginia) Public Schools

ERIC Q & A February 2002

In recent years health literacy has garnered increasing attention in the adult literacy, English as a second language (ESL), and healthcare fields. Recent research findings indicate a correlation between low literacy and poor health in adults and between poor health and difficulties in participating in educational programs (Hohn, 1998). This Q&A defines health literacy and its importance in the United States and discusses implications for adult English language learners, instructors, and programs. It also offers a few recommendations for addressing health literacy in the ESL classroom.

What is health literacy?

The American Medical Association defines health literacy as "a constellation of skills, including the ability to perform basic reading and numerical tasks required to function in the health care environment. Patients with adequate health literacy can read, understand, and act on health care information" (Bresolin, 1999, p. 553). The National Library of Medicine (NLM; 2000) defines health literacy as "the degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions" (p. v). From the field of adult literacy, Harvard health literacy specialist Rima Rudd (2001) explains health literacy as the ability to use English to solve health-related problems at a proficiency level that enables one to achieve one's health goals, and develop health knowledge and potential.

Rudd's definition seems most appropriate to ESL literacy instruction because it addresses the significant linguistic and cultural obstacles nonnative speakers may encounter when seeking health care in the United States. Also, it refers to attaining personal health goals; people from different cultures understand health differently, and NLM's ambiguous "appropriate health decisions" may refer to decisions supported by U.S. medical culture alone.

What is the history of health literacy instruction?

Health has been included in ESL instruction since the advent of competency-based education (CBE) in the mid-1970s (Crandall & Peyton, 1993). The term health literacy was first coined in 1974 in a paper calling for minimum health education standards for all school grade levels (National Library of Medicine, 2000). The Mainstream English Language Training (MELT) program of 1983 formally recommended health as a standard in competency-based ESL curricula, resulting in its broad inclusion in commercial textbooks and individual program curricula (Grognet, 1997).

Health literacy gained visibility in 1993 with the publication of results from the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS), which found that almost "44 million Americans are functionally illiterate, or approximately one quarter of the U.S. population, and another 50 million have marginal literacy skills" (Bresolin, 1999, p. 552). For the most part, health education materials target adults with an eighth- to tenth-grade reading level. Many adults, however, both native and nonnative speakers, read significantly below these levels and thus have great difficulty utilizing health care safely and effectively. Furthermore, adult ESL learners themselves indicate an interest in and need for studying health-related issues (Povenmire & Hohn, 2001).

How are literacy and health professionals responding to health literacy needs?

Literacy and health professionals agree that a collaborative effort is needed. Some in the medical field are assessing patients' literacy levels, revising educational materials into plain language, and providing patients with oral and video instruction in addition to written materials. Written materials are being translated into other languages, and medical professionals are receiving cultural sensitivity training. Some healthcare facilities are using certified medical interpreters for patients with limited English.

While these improvements are occurring, however, advancing medical developments demand that patients become more proactive and self-advocating than ever before. For example, many patients utilizing managed care must routinely advocate—on the telephone and in writing—for insurance coverage of procedures and treatments. As patient time with healthcare providers is often brief, it is becoming more important for patients to increase their own knowledge of health issues through research via the Internet and other sources. Additionally, as technological and pharmacological ad-

vances in the medical field create more treatment options, patients are expected to make complicated treatment decisions. These are challenges for many people and are especially daunting for those who are still learning the language.

What obstacles may ESL learners encounter?

Obstacles that adult English language learners may encounter in developing health literacy have been discussed by ESL educators (Brown, Ojeda, Wyn, & Levan, 2000; Feld & Power, 2000; Singleton, 2002):

- Lack of access to basic health care due to language barriers, lack of insurance, lack of information on available low-cost services, or fear of jeopardizing immigration status by utilizing such services.
- Lack of language skills. Learners may be unable to speak for themselves, use sophisticated vocabulary, formulate appropriate questions in a medical setting, or comprehend basic instructions without an interpreter. Many immigrants use their children as interpreters. This creates problems for the adults who fear losing status with their children, for the healthcare professionals who must deal with a child rather than an adult, and for the children who are put in situations where they are expected to function as adults and to convey intimate health information about their parents.
- Lack of educational background (for some students) in basic human physiology, which precludes comprehension of treatment information even with an interpreter's help.
- Lack of awareness of U.S. healthcare culture, including what is expected of the patient (e.g., preventive behaviors, treatment compliance, proactive questioning, provision of medical history, payment procedures) and what the patient can expect of care providers (e.g., patient's right to an interpreter, right to have questions answered and information clarified, right to a second opinion).
- Lack of identification with culture of health materials. The 1993 NALS results showed the majority of marginally literate adults to be white and native born (Bresolin, 1999); many health education materials may therefore be culturally and idiomatically directed to this population, making the content less accessible to patients from other backgrounds. Furthermore, careful thought needs to be given by teachers when using cartoons from brochures and textbooks. Illustrations, especially those of isolated body parts, may be unclear to English language learners, perhaps even incomprehensible to people with limited literacy in their native language (Hiffeldt, 1985). They also may be offensive to some groups. Teachers need to be aware of these issues and prepared to use other resources such as photographs, videos, or gestures.
- Lack of awareness of available mental health treatment. English language learners often do not know that treatments exist for managing depression, anxiety, and mental illnesses. Some learners who are aware of mental health treatment still lack information on the growing availability of culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate care (Adkins, Sample, & Berman, 1999; Isserlis, 2000; see also Center for Multicultural Human Services [Resources]).

What are some challenges for ESL instructors?

Instructors may find the personal nature of class health discussions uncomfortable. They also may need to broaden their knowledge of the availability of health resources in their community. To address both of these issues, they can access informational support in the community by forming partnerships with health professionals. Additionally, the Internet can provide helpful information on insurance and other health care culture issues (see Resources).

Teachers may worry about being unfamiliar with their students' cultural beliefs on health issues. Learners can be resources for this. In the classroom, all views should be respected and students given the choice whether or not to share personal stories and beliefs such as traditional health practices from their native culture. Although general awareness is increasing, students need to know that the mainstream medical field may have less awareness or respect than do their instructors for health remedies and customs outside those practiced in Western medicine.

Instructors of students with minimal English literacy must select health materials carefully. If written information appropriate for students' reading level is unavailable, the teacher can orally provide clear information.

What kinds of activities develop health literacy?

As the health information needs of ESL students can be extensive, instructors must decide how much time is available to meet these and other curricular needs. LaMachia and Morrish (2001) and Povenmire and Hohn (2001) stress that class time spent on health can be particularly effective for language-skill and critical-thinking development. In a class activity leading up to speaking with a healthcare provider, students can practice a basic dialogue with the teacher, then work in groups to brainstorm other questions to ask the doctor about health-related concerns. For example, many immigrants are found to be carriers of dormant or active tuberculosis (TB) and are given the antibacterial drug

Isoniazid to treat it. The following dialogue and activities can be used to prepare intermediate-level students for speaking with a doctor at a public clinic.

Dialogue

Doctor: *Your skin test and x-ray show you are positive for TB.*
Patient: *Is it serious?*
Doctor: *No, the TB is not active, but you need to take medicine so it won't make you sick in the future.*
Patient: *What medicine should I take?*
Doctor: *You need to take 300 mg. of Isoniazid every day for 6 months.*

Activities

1. As a whole group, students go over vocabulary and pronunciation and then recite the dialogue.
2. After this, learners work in small groups, utilizing critical thinking, teamwork, speaking, listening, and writing skills as they brainstorm questions they want to ask the doctor about taking Isoniazid, such as how to take it, what are serious side effects, what are less serious side effects, and what should they do for the serious side effects.
3. Back in the whole group, the teacher helps learners correct question formation and practice the questions. Issues about what questions are appropriate to ask the doctor are discussed.
4. The teacher provides vocabulary on side effects and precautions (see Resources).
5. A role-play activity where students act out a conversation with the doctor about taking Isoniazid provides further listening and speaking practice.

How can programs use a participatory approach to health literacy instruction?

Health competencies such as making an appointment, reporting medical problems, or asking about prescription side effects have typically been taught in ESL classes via CBE, blended with features of other approaches—such as whole language, learner-centered, or language experience—according to teaching styles and learner needs.

Participatory approaches to teaching health, often coupled with the development of a project, have received much attention recently in the adult education field. Students select health topics, such as how to find affordable, culturally sensitive health care in their area; how to prevent HIV infection; or how to determine the health problems prevalent in their ethnic or age group and how to prevent or treat them. They investigate the topic in teams and create a product (e.g., a brochure or presentation) to educate others (Hohn, 1998). Projects can improve language skills, enhance learner motivation and confidence, and ultimately empower learners. Moss and Van Duzer (1998) warn, however, that project-based learning "involves careful planning and flexibility on the part of the teacher" (p. 2), which may be difficult in some less intensive ESL classes with time constraints or for instructors with limited training. It may also be inefficient for conveying needed basic healthcare information to beginners, newcomers, or people with minimal literacy skills.

Conclusion

Adult English language learners face significant social, linguistic, and cultural obstacles to healthcare self-efficacy. Sensitive health instruction continues to help learners negotiate some of these obstacles. Ensuring that adult English language learners have the literacy skills and cultural information necessary to access the care they need means specific training and lesson preparation for instructors, collaboration with healthcare providers, and more recognition of its importance by program administrators and funders.

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Resources

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American Pharmaceutical Association. *Avoiding medication errors*. http://www.pharmacyandyou.org/aboutmedicine/med.html

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Beginning to Work With Adult English Language Learners: Some Considerations

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In many parts of the United States, the number of nonnative adult learners seeking English language instruction is growing. States such as North Carolina, Arkansas, Georgia, Tennessee, Nebraska, and Iowa, not historically associated with immigrant influxes, have been experiencing increased growth rates with these populations in the last decade (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001). In 1998, 47% of the participants in federally funded adult education programs were there to learn English as a second language (ESL) (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, 1999). As immigrant populations seek English language instruction, the need for teachers to serve them is drawing people into the adult ESL teaching field. Some of these teachers have training and experience working with adults learning English. However, many are working with these learners for the first time.

What do teachers who are beginning to work with adult English language learners need to know? This Q&A discusses recommendations in four areas: application of principles of adult learning in ESL contexts, second language acquisition, culture and working with multicultural groups, and instructional approaches that support language development in adults. It is not intended to be comprehensive. Rather, it gives teachers an overview of important points, suggests basic strategies to use, and provides resources to consult for further information.

How do the principles of adult learning apply to adult English language learners?

Malcolm Knowles' (1973) principles of andragogy, the art and science of facilitating adult learning, are still seminal to many of today's theories about learning and instruction for adults.

> Adults are self-directed in their learning.
> Adults have reservoirs of experience that serve as resources as they learn.
> Adults are practical, problem-solving-oriented learners.
> Adults want their learning to be immediately applicable to their lives.
> Adults want to know why something needs to be learned.

In general, this picture of the practical, purposeful, self-directed learner is representative of adults, whether they are native or nonnative English speakers. All adult learners need adult-appropriate content, materials, and activities that speak to their needs and interests and allow them to demonstrate their knowledge and abilities.

So what is different for English language learners? Obviously, they need help with the language as they learn content. Teachers working with English language learners also need to think about how Knowles' adult learner characteristics are filtered through culture, language, and experience. For example, it is not uncommon to find nonnative learners who may be hesitant to take charge of their own learning. Their educational experiences in their countries may have taught them that the teacher is the unquestioned expert. They may be resistant to a learner-centered classroom where they are expected to develop goals and work in groups with other learners (Shank & Terrill, 1995).

Nonnative learners also may resist the lifeskill-oriented instruction that is common in many adult ESL programs. Coming from cultures where learning is a high-status, academic endeavor, they may expect a more academically oriented environment (Hardman, 1999). Because of this, teachers should explain to learners why they are learning what they are learning in this new way. Similarly, because many English language learners may have studied English grammar and are familiar with the terms describing language components, instructors should be prepared, when appropriate, to answer learners' questions about sentence structure and vocabulary.

What do instructors need to know about second language acquisition (SLA)?

Theories about how languages are learned can be complex. However, having some understanding of how people acquire and use languages can be useful to the teachers of adult English language learners.

Second language acquisition theories address cognitive issues (how the brain processes information in general and language in particular), affective issues (how emotions factor into second language processing and learning), and linguistic issues (how learners interact with and internalize

new language systems). The following are some suggestions that instructors can use in the classroom. They are drawn from theories of second language acquisition generally accepted as relevant for most second language learners (summarized from Brown, 2001; Krashen, 1981).

- ***Meaningful interaction and natural communication in the target language are necessary for successful language acquisition.***

  Learners need to *use* the language, not simply talk about it. Give learners opportunities and purposes for communication that reflect or relate to their lives (e.g., role-playing a doctor/patient exchange or creating a chart with information on local medical services). Use authentic materials in activities whenever possible (e.g., listening for details in a recorded telephone message or reading classified ads from the local newspaper).

- ***Effective language use involves an automatic processing of language.***

  To become proficient, learners need to move from a concentrated focus on grammar, forms, and structures to using language as a tool to accomplish communication tasks. Think about the purpose of each lesson (e.g., is it important that the learner produce a specific grammar point or communicate an idea?) and interject error correction to serve those purposes. For example, if the activity is an oral substitution drill practicing the correct use of irregular past tense forms, it is appropriate to correct the verb form being used. However, if the focus of the lesson is making small talk on the job—a communication that involves use of irregular past tense verbs—correction may simply consist of a repetition of the correct form by the teacher (e.g., "I go to a movie last Saturday" is corrected by, "Oh, you went to a movie. What movie did you see?").

- ***Language learners can monitor their speech for correctness when they have time to focus their attention on form and know the language rules involved.***

  Give learners sufficient time for activities, to communicate, and to monitor their performance. Integrate lessons on grammar, structures, and language rules that are relevant to the communication task at hand (e.g., present lessons on imperatives when discussing giving directions) so that learners become familiar with correct structures. Focus activity objectives so that learners are not asked to process and monitor too many points at one time (e.g., asking learners to use new vocabulary and correctly use present and present progressive verb forms in an unfamiliar dialogue format can be overwhelming).

- ***Second language acquisition occurs when learners are exposed to language that is at and slightly above their level of comprehension.***

  In the materials you use and in your own speech, expose learners to language that is both at and slightly above what they can comfortably understand. Offer a balance of easier reading and listening activities with more challenging ones. Provide pictures, gestures, and prompts when learners are asked to use more complex language.

- ***People have affective filters (created by a variety of factors such as motivation, self-confidence, or anxiety) that can support or disrupt acquisition of a second language.***

  Create a classroom environment in which learners feel comfortable using and taking risks with English. Use activities that ask learners to work together or share information to build a sense of familiarity and community. Make sure the physical environment is as comfortable as possible. Avoid constant error correction and include activities that focus on overall ability to communicate meaning. Recycle topics or activities that motivate learners.

- ***There are "interlanguage" periods during which learners make systematic errors that are a natural part of language learning.***

  These may be similar to those of a child learning a first language (e.g., adding *ed* to signify all past tense verbs) or similar to patterns in a learner's native language (e.g., Spanish speakers placing adjectives after nouns, such as *shirt blue*). If errors appear to be normal and developmental, provide feedback and modeling of correct structures to support learners as they move through these steps. If an error persists, consider more structured practice on the point.

- ***There is a silent period during which learners are absorbing the new language prior to producing it.***

  The length of this period may vary for each learner. Allow learners time to adjust to the new language and begin to internalize its sounds and patterns. Use activities that allow them to demonstrate comprehension without having to produce language (e.g., say new vocabulary and ask learners to hold up picture cards that illustrate each word).

- ***Second language acquisition theories are based on research that investigates specific questions with specific populations in defined circumstances.***

  Some theories may be accepted as applicable across populations and contexts; the broad application of others

may be debatable. Evaluate how a theory may or may not relate to adult English language learners in general and to learners in your class specifically. Use second language acquisition theories to help make decisions about balancing different language learning activities; observe and respond to learner progress; and set realistic expectations of what learners can accomplish.

What do instructors need to know about culture and working with multicultural groups?

Culture and language are closely related. Learning a new language involves learning about (but not necessarily wholeheartedly embracing) new ways of thinking, feeling, and expressing. This process can put tremendous pressure on an adult who has a well-developed sense of self in the native language and culture. Because immigrants are, to varying degrees and not always consciously, re-configuring their views of themselves in relation to a new social context, they may at times be ambivalent, confused, or even hostile to the process of adapting to a new culture (Ullman, 1997). This includes language learning. Teachers can help ease this process in a variety of ways:

- Become acquainted with learners' cultures to better understand their perspectives and expectations both inside and outside the classroom (e.g., traditional literacy practices, gender roles, teacher and learner roles, historic interactions with other cultural groups, rhetorical patterns, religious beliefs and customs). Avoid generalizing and stereotyping learners. Acknowledge and respect differences. When discussing cultural differences and traditions in class, focus on descriptions rather than judgments.
- Learners may not be willing or able to participate in activities that involve discussion of taboo subjects, revelation of personal information, or reliving of painful experiences. For example, a refugee who lost family in a war may be very uncomfortable when a teacher asks learners to bring in pictures of their families for an activity. Be aware of the possible implications of activities or topics and offer learners options through which they can respond neutrally, such as bringing a photo of a family from a magazine instead of a personal photo.
- Remember that culture can play a role in all facets of language, including response time. Many English language learners will come from cultures where silence is not uncomfortable. When this factor is coupled with the reality of a slower processing time for listening comprehension in a second language, it suggests that waiting after asking a question (possibly as long as 10 seconds) before repeating or restating the question is advisable.

What instructional approaches support second language development in adults?

Adult English language learners come to ESL classes to master a tool that will help them satisfy other needs, wants, and goals. Therefore, they need to learn about the English language, to practice it, and to use it.

A variety of instructional approaches and techniques support language learning and language use (see Crandall & Peyton, 1993). Teachers need to examine these options and decide which approaches are most appropriate for them, their learners, and their settings. The following is a summary of general strategies to use with learners:

1) ***Get to know your students and their needs.*** English language learners' abilities, experiences, and expectations can affect learning. Get to know their backgrounds and goals as well as proficiency levels and skill needs.

2) ***Use visuals to support your instruction.*** English language learners need context in their learning process. Using gestures, expressions, pictures, and realia makes words and concepts concrete and connections more obvious and memorable. Encourage learners to do the same as they try to communicate meaning.

3) ***Model tasks before asking your learners to do them.*** Learners need to become familiar with vocabulary, conversational patterns, grammar structures, and even activity formats before producing them. Demonstrate a task before asking learners to respond.

4) ***Foster a safe classroom environment.*** Like many adult learners, some English language learners have had negative educational experiences. Many will be unfamiliar with classroom activities and with expectations common in the United States. Include time for activities that allow learners to get to know one another.

5) ***Watch both your teacher talk and your writing.*** Teacher talk refers to the directions, explanations, and general comments and conversations that a teacher may engage in within the classroom. Keep teacher talk simple and clear; use pictures, gestures, demonstrations, and facial expressions to reinforce messages whenever possible. Use print letters, with space between letters and words, and do not overload the chalkboard with too much or disorganized text.

Although it is important for the teacher to understand the structure of the English language, it may not always be appropriate to provide complex explanations of

vocabulary and grammar rules, especially to beginning-level learners. In other words, don't feel you have to explain everything at all times. At times it is enough for learners to know the response needed.

6) ***Use scaffolding techniques to support tasks.*** Build sequencing, structure, and support in learning activities. Ask learners to fill in words in a skeletal dialogue and then create a dialogue of a similar situation, or supply key vocabulary before asking learners to complete a form. Recycle vocabulary, structures, and concepts in the course of instruction. Build redundancy into the curriculum to help learners practice using learned vocabulary or skills in new situations or for different purposes.

7) ***Bring authentic materials to the classroom.*** Use materials like newspapers, signs, sale flyers, telephone books, and brochures in the classroom. These help learners connect what they are learning to the real world and familiarize them with the formats and information in such publications. However, do prepare learners beforehand (e.g., pre-teach vocabulary) and carefully structure lessons (e.g., select relevant, manageable chunks of the authentic material) to make this work.

8) ***Don't overload learners.*** Strike a balance in each activity between elements that are familiar and mastered and those that are new. Asking learners to use both new vocabulary and a new grammatical structure in a role-playing activity where they have to develop original dialogue may be too much for them to do successfully.

9) ***Balance variety and routine in your activities.*** Patterns and routines provide familiarity and security and support learners as they tackle new items. But English language learners, like all learners, have a variety of preferences for processing and learning information. They also can get bored. Give learners opportunities to experience and demonstrate their mastery of language in different ways. Challenge them with activities that speak to their lives, concerns, and goals as adults.

10) ***Celebrate success.*** Progress for language learners can be slow and incremental. Learners need to know that they are moving forward. Make sure expectations are realistic; create opportunities for success; set short-term as well as long-term goals; and help learners recognize and acknowledge their own progress.

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Additional Resources

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National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education

Needs Assessment for Adult ESL Learners

by Kathleen Santopietro Weddel, Colorado Department of Education
Carol Van Duzer, National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education

Assessment of literacy needs from the learner's perspective is an important part of an instructional program. Learners come to adult English as a second language (ESL) literacy programs for diverse reasons. Although they may say they just want to "learn English," they frequently have very specific learning goals and needs: for example, to be able to read to their children, to get a job, or to become a citizen. If their needs are not met, they are more likely to drop out than to voice their dissatisfaction (Grant & Shank, 1993). The needs assessment process can be used as the basis for developing curricula and classroom practice that are responsive to these needs.

Although learner needs assessment encompasses both what learners know and can do (learner proficiencies) and what they want to learn and be able to do, this digest focuses on ways to determine what learners want or believe they need to learn. Many of the activities described can also include or lead to assessment of proficiencies, and many of the sources cited include both types of assessment. (See Burt & Keenan, 1995, for a discussion of assessment of what learners know.)

What is Needs Assessment?

The word "assess" comes from the Latin term "assidere," which means to "sit beside." Process-minded and participatory-oriented adult educators "sit beside" learners to learn about their proficiencies and backgrounds, educational goals, and expected outcomes, immersing themselves in the lives and views of their students (Auerbach, 1994).

A needs assessment for use with adult learners of English is a tool that examines, from the perspective of the learner, what kinds of English, native language, and literacy skills the learner already believes he or she has; the literacy contexts in which the learner lives and works; what the learner wants and needs to know to function in those contexts; what the learner expects to gain from the instructional program; and what might need to be done in the native language or with the aid of an interpreter. The needs assessment focuses and builds on learners' accomplishments and abilities rather than deficits, allowing learners to articulate and display what they already know (Auerbach, 1994; Holt, 1994).

Needs assessment is a continual process and takes place throughout the instructional program (Burnaby, 1989; Savage, 1993), thus influencing student placement, materials selection, curriculum design, and teaching approaches (Wrigley & Guth, 1992). As Burnaby (1989) noted, "The curriculum content and learning experiences to take place in class should be negotiated between learners, teacher, and coordinator at the beginning of the project and renegotiated regularly during the project" (p. 20). At the beginning of the program, needs assessment might be used to determine appropriate program types and course content; during the program, it assures that learner and program goals are being met and allows for necessary program changes; at the end of the program, it can be used for assessing progress and planning future directions for the learners and the program.

Why is Needs Assessment Important?

A needs assessment serves a number of purposes:

- It aids administrators, teachers, and tutors with learner placement and in developing materials, curricula, skills assessments, teaching approaches, and teacher training.
- It assures a flexible, responsive curriculum rather than a fixed, linear curriculum determined ahead of time by instructors.
- It provides information to the instructor and learner about what the learner brings to the course (if done at the beginning), what has been accomplished (if done during the course), and what the learner wants and needs to know next.

Factors that contribute to learner attrition in adult literacy programs include inappropriate placement and instructional materials and approaches that are not relevant to learners' needs and lives (Brod, 1995). When learners know that educators understand and want to address their needs and interests, they are motivated to continue in a program and to learn.

Assessment Tools

Needs assessments with ESL learners, as well as with those in adult basic education programs, can take a variety of forms, including survey questionnaires, where learners check areas of interest or need, open-ended interviews, or informal performance observations. For needs assessment to be effective, tools and activities must be appropriate for the particular learner or group of learners. For example, reading texts in English might be translated into the learners' native language, read aloud by the teacher or an aide (in English or the native language), or represented pictorially. Types of needs assessment tools and activities include

Survey questionnaires. Many types of questionnaires have been designed to determine learners' literacy needs. Frequently they consist of a list of topics, skills, or language and literacy uses. The learners indicate what they already know or want to know by checking in the appropriate column or box, or they may be asked to use a scale to rank the importance of each item. For beginning learners who do not read English, pictures depicting different literacy contexts (such as using a telephone, buying groceries, driving a car, and using transportation) can be shown, and learners can mark the contexts that apply to them. For example, using transportation could be represented by pictures of a bus, a subway, and a taxi. The list of questionnaire items can be prepared ahead of time by the teacher or generated by the students themselves through class discussion.

Learner-compiled inventories of language and literacy use. A more open-ended way to get the same information that surveys offer is to have learners

keep lists of ways they use language and literacy and to update them periodically (McGrail & Schwartz, 1993).

Learner interviews. Interviews with learners, either one-on-one or in small groups, in their native language or in English, can provide valuable information about what learners know, what their interests are, and the ways they use or hope to use literacy.

Review of reading materials. An instructor can spread out a range of reading materials on the table (e.g., newspapers, magazines, children's books, comics, and greeting cards, and ask learners which they would like to read and whether they would like to work in class on any of them. A similar activity can be done with different types of writing.

Class discussions. Showing pictures of adults in various contexts, the teacher can ask, "What literacy skills does this person want to develop?" and have learners generate a list. The teacher then asks, "Why do you want to develop literacy skills?" Learners might be more willing to express their desires if they move from the impersonal to the personal in this way (Auerbach, 1994).

Personal or dialogue journals. Learners' journals—where they write freely about their activities, experiences, and plans—can be a rich source of information about their literacy needs (Peyton, 1993).

Timelines. Learners can prepare their own personal timelines, in writing or pictorially, that indicate major events in their lives as well as future goals. Discussion can then focus on how progress towards those goals can be met through the class (Santopietro, 1991).

Needs Assessment in One Adult ESL Program

The Arlington Education and Employment Program (REEP) in Arlington, Virginia periodically conducts a program-wide needs assessment to determine the interests and goals of ESL learners in the community. The director and program coordinators collaborate with community agencies, schools, and employers to identify ways in which the REEP program can prepare learners for the economic, civic, and family opportunities available in the community. This information is then used for program planning purposes, such as developing courses, curricula, and materials, and preparing needs assessment tools. Learner interviews and a placement test assessing general language proficiency are used to place learners in an instructional level. Once they are in the classroom, learners participate in a continual needs assessment process to plan what they want to learn and how they want to learn it.

In-class needs assessment is most successful when learners understand its purpose and are comfortable with each other. Because of this, the first curriculum unit in every new class is called "Getting Started" (Arlington Education and Employment Program, 1994). It enables learners to get to know one another through the needs assessment process as they acknowledge shared concerns and begin to build a community in the classroom (Van Duzer, 1995). For several days, some class time may be spent discussing where they use English, what they do with it, what problems they have encountered, and why they feel they need to improve their language skills and knowledge. Through this process, both the learners and the teacher become aware of the goals and needs represented in the class. A variety of level-appropriate techniques, like those mentioned above, are used to come to a concensus on the class instructional plan and to develop individual learning plans. Learners select from both program-established curricular units and from their identified needs. The needs assessment process serves as both a learning and information-gathering process as learners use critical thinking, negotiation, and problem-solving skills to reach this plan.

Once the class instructional plan is selected, ways are discussed to meet individual learner needs apart from the whole class such as through small in-class focus groups, working with a volunteer, time in the program's computer learning lab, assistance obtaining self-study materials, or referral to other programs. The class plan is revisited each time a unit is completed to remind the learners where they have been and where they are going and to enable the teacher to make changes or adjustments to content or instruction as new needs are uncovered.

Conclusion

Needs assessment can take many forms and can be carried out at different times during the instructional process. Whatever the focus and format, the basic purpose is to determine what learners want and need to learn. When curriculum content, materials, and teaching approaches match learners' perceived and actual needs, learner motivation and success are enhanced.

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Adult ESL Learner Assessment: Purposes and Tools

by Miriam Burt and Fran Keenan
National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education (NCLE)

Learner assessment is conducted in adult basic education (ABE) and adult English as a second language (ESL) educational programs for many reasons—to place learners in appropriate instructional levels, to measure their ongoing progress, to qualify them to enroll in academic or job training programs, to verify program effectiveness, and to demonstrate learner gains in order to justify continued funding for a program. Because of this multiplicity of objectives, learner assessment involves using a variety of instruments and procedures to gather data on a regular basis to ensure that programs are "identifying learners' needs, documenting the learners' progress toward meeting their own goals, and ascertaining the extent to which the project objectives are being met" (Holt, 1994, p. 6).

This digest looks at learner assessment in adult ESL programs. It describes commercially available tests and alternative assessment tools, discusses key issues in assessment, and highlights some of the differences between assessment and evaluation.

Commercially Available Tests

In adult basic education, commercially available instruments such as the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) and the Adult Basic Learning Examination (ABLE) predominate as assessment tools because they have construct validity and scoring reliability, are easy to administer to groups, require minimal training on the part of the teacher, and are often stipulated by funding sources (Solórzano, 1994; Wrigley, 1992). ESL tests most commonly used in adult education programs are the Basic English Skills Test (BEST) and the CASAS ESL Appraisal (Sticht, 1990).

The BEST, originally developed by the Center for Applied Linguistics in 1982 to test newly arrived Southeast Asian refugees, assesses English literacy (reading and writing) skills and listening and speaking skills. Although this test measures language and literacy skills at the lowest levels (no speaking is necessary for some items as learners respond to pictures by pointing), it requires some training on the part of the tester. Also, the oral segment is lengthy and must be administered individually (Sticht, 1990).

The Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) of California has developed competencies, training manuals, and assessment tools for ABE and ESL programs. The CASAS ESL Appraisal is multiple choice and includes reading and listening items. It is easy to administer because it is given to groups, but does not test oral skills (Sticht, 1990).

Other tests used for ESL are the NYSPLACE Test, published by New York State, which is designed for placement and includes a basic English literacy screening and an oral assessment; the Basic Inventory of Natural Language (BINL) which provides a grammatical analysis of spoken language; the Henderson-Moriarty ESL Placement (HELP) test which was designed to measure the literacy skills (in the native language and in English) and the oral English proficiency of Southeast Asian refugee adults; and Literacy Volunteers of America's ESL Oral Assessment (ESLOA) which assesses a learner's ability to speak and understand English.

Limitations of Commercially Available Tests

The use of commercially available tests with adult learners is problematic because these tools may not adequately assess individual learner strengths and weaknesses especially at the lowest level of literacy skills. Such tests do not necessarily measure what has been learned in class, nor address learner goals (Lytle & Wolf, 1989; Wrigley, 1992).

Some testing issues are unique to ESL learners. It is not always clear whether ESL learners have trouble with selected test items because of difficulties with reading, with the vocabulary, or with the cultural notions underlying the test items (Wrigley & Guth, 1992). Another problem may be that some low-literate ESL learners are unfamiliar with classroom conventions such as test taking. Henderson and Moriarty, in their introduction to the HELP test, advise that ESL programs should evaluate whether learners possess the functional skills necessary for writing (such as holding a pencil), are familiar with classroom behaviors (such as responding to teacher questions), and are able to keep up with the pace of learning in beginning level classes (Wrigley and Guth, 1992).

Some would argue that the tests themselves are not the problem, but rather their inappropriate use, for example, administering a commercially available adult *literacy* test (assesses reading and writing skills) to measure English language *proficiency* (listening and speaking ability). Funding stipulations may specify inappropriate instruments (Solórzano, 1994) or even tests developed for native speakers (e.g., TABE, ABLE). Wilde (1994) suggests that programs maximize the benefits of commercially available, norm-referenced, and diagnostic tests by, (1) choosing tests that match the demographic and educational backgrounds of the learners; (2) interpreting scores carefully; (3) ensuring that test objectives match the program objectives and curricular content; and (4) using additional instruments to measure learner achievement.

Alternatives to Commercially Available Tests

Due in part to the drawbacks of the tests described above, many adult (and K-12) educators promote the use of alternative assessment tools that incorporate learner goals and relate more closely to instruction (Lytle & Wolfe, 1989). Alternative assessment (also known as classroom-based, authentic, or congruent assessment) includes such tools as surveys, interviews, checklists, observation measures, teacher-developed tests, learner self-assessment, portfolios and other performance samples, and performance-based tests (Balliro, 1993; Genesee, 1994; Isserlis, 1992; Wrigley, 1992.)

Alternative assessment allows for flexibility in gathering information about learners and measures what has been taught in class. *Learner portfolios*, collections of individual work, are common examples of alternative assessment. Portfolios can include such items as reports on books read, notes from learner/teacher

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interviews, learners' reflections on their progress, writing samples, data from performance-based assessments, *and* scores on commercially available tests (Fingeret, 1993; Wrigley, 1992). From *learner interviews*, administrators and instructors get information to help with placement decisions and to determine an individual's progress. In one survey of adult teachers, 80% reported using oral interviews to assess what students needed and what they were learning (Davis and Yap, 1992). From program-developed *performance-based tests*, instructors, administrators, and the learners themselves get information on how learners use English and basic skills regularly. These tests, in which items (such as reading a chart or locating information on a schedule) are put in actual contexts the learners might encounter (Alamprese & Kay, 1993; Holt, 1994), are common in workplace programs. Authentic materials such as job schedules, pay stubs, and union contracts provide the context in which literacy skills are assessed.

Alternative assessment procedures, however, are not a panacea. Maintaining portfolios is time consuming for both learners and teachers. The cultural expectations and educational backgrounds of ESL learners might make them especially resistant to the use of participatory and other alternative assessments (Wrigley & Guth, 1992). Furthermore, funders often require "hard data," and it is difficult to quantify outcomes without using commercially available tests. Finally, data from alternative assessment instruments may not meet eligibility requirements for job training programs, or higher level classes, or certification (Balliro, 1993; Lytle & Wolfe, 1989).

Because of these issues, ESL programs often use a combination of commercially available and program-developed assessment instruments to assess literacy and language proficiency (Guth & Wrigley, 1992; Wrigley, 1992).

Learner Assessment and Program Evaluation

Although learner progress, as measured both by commercially available and alternative assessment instruments, is an indicator of program effectiveness, it is not the only factor in evaluating ABE and adult ESL programs. Other quantifiable indicators include learner retention, learner promotion to higher levels of instruction, and learner transition to jobs or to other types of programs (e.g., moving from an adult ESL program to a vocational program, or to a for-credit ESL or academic program). Less quantifiable learner outcomes include heightened self-esteem and increased participation in community, school, and church events (Alamprese & Kay, 1993).

Other measures of adult education program effectiveness depend to a large extent on program goals. In family literacy programs, increased parental participation in children's learning, parents reading more frequently to their children, and the presence of more books in the home might indicate success (Holt, 1994). Workplace program outcomes might include promotion to higher level jobs, increased participation in work teams, and improved worker attitude that shows up in better job attendance and in a willingness to learn new skills (Alamprese & Kay, 1993).

Conclusion

Assessment is problematic for adult ESL educators searching for tools that will quantify learner gains and program success to funders, demonstrate improvement in English proficiency and literacy skills to learners, and clarify for the educators themselves what has been learned and what has not. Dissatisfaction with commercially available tools has been widespread, and many teachers have felt left out of the process of determining how to assess learner gains in a way that helps teaching *and* learning. Current practice and theory seem to recommend using a combination of commercially available and program-developed alternative assessment instruments. Further research in this area both by teachers and researchers is warranted.

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Resources

Adventures in Assessment: Learner-Centered Approaches to Assessment and Evaluation in Adult Literacy. (This annual journal is available from SABES Central Resource Center, World Education, 210 Lincoln Street, Boston, MA 02111; http://www.sabes.org/adven.htm)

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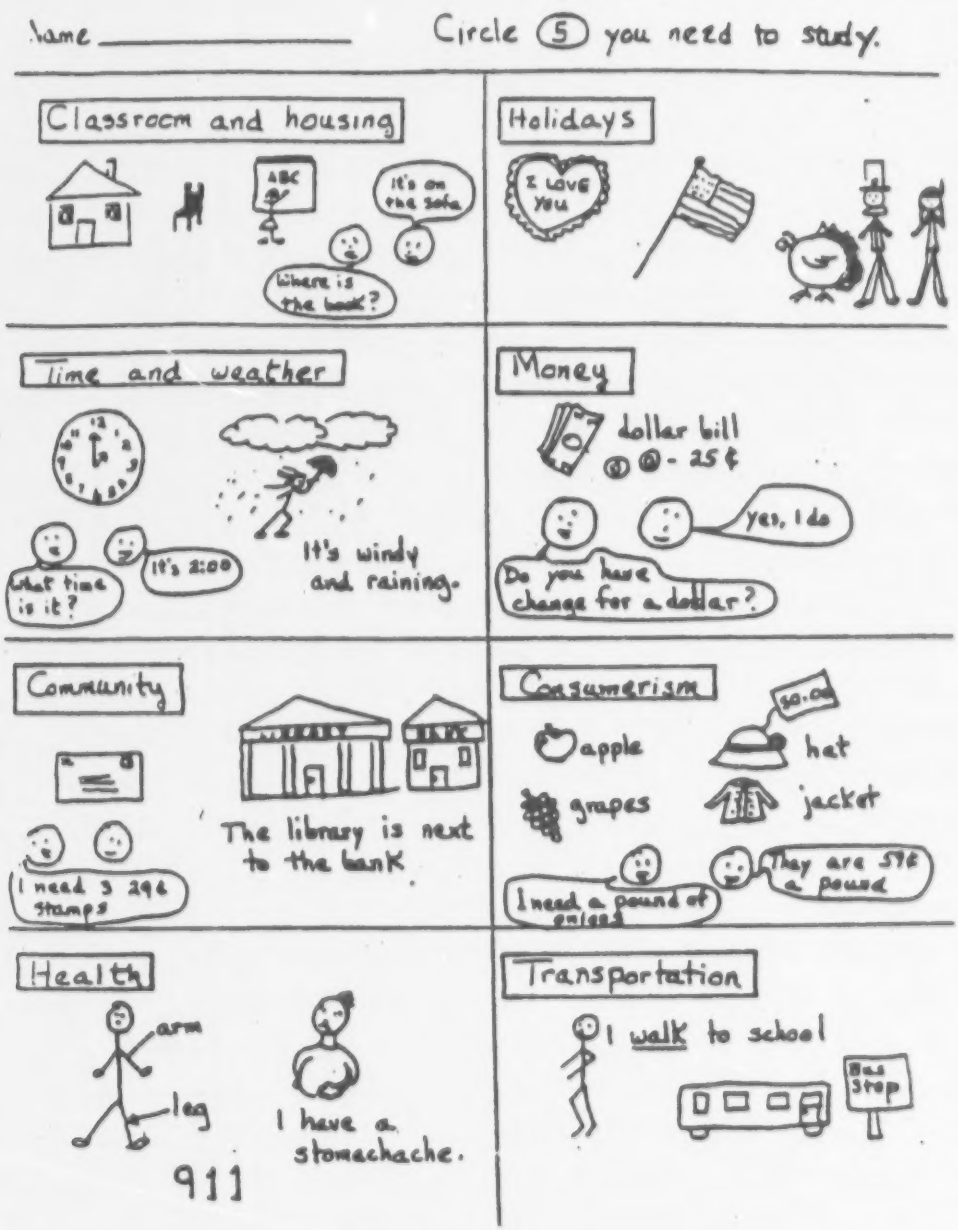
PICTURE QUESTIONNAIRES[2]

Picture Questionnaires assist low level learners in prioritizing the places where they want to be able to use English.

Suggested Instructional Steps: Using a visual of a person, discuss the places where this person needs to use English. As a group, complete a questionnaire for the person. Have students complete the questionnaire individually, indicating X for places where they need to use English. To process, the class does an oral tally or a prioritizing activity and discusses instructional implications.



[2] Adapted by Donna Moss from Santopietro, Kathleen. 1992. "Needs Assessment: A Condition of Learning." Vancouver, B.C. 26th Annual TESOL Convention.

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ANSWER FOR **YOU**

	Who did you speak to?	What did you say?	Was it easy? Was it difficult?
At home?			Easy A little difficult Difficult
At work?			Easy A little difficult Difficult
At the store			Easy A little difficult Difficult

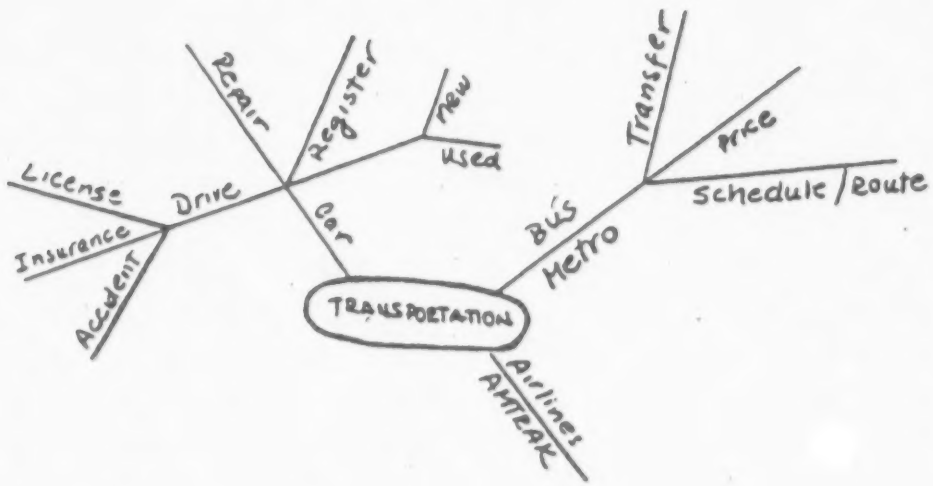
ASK YOUR **PARTNER**

	Who did you speak to?	What did you say?	Was it easy? Was it difficult?
At home?			Easy A little difficult Difficult
At work?			Easy A little difficult Difficult
At the store?			Easy A little difficult Difficult

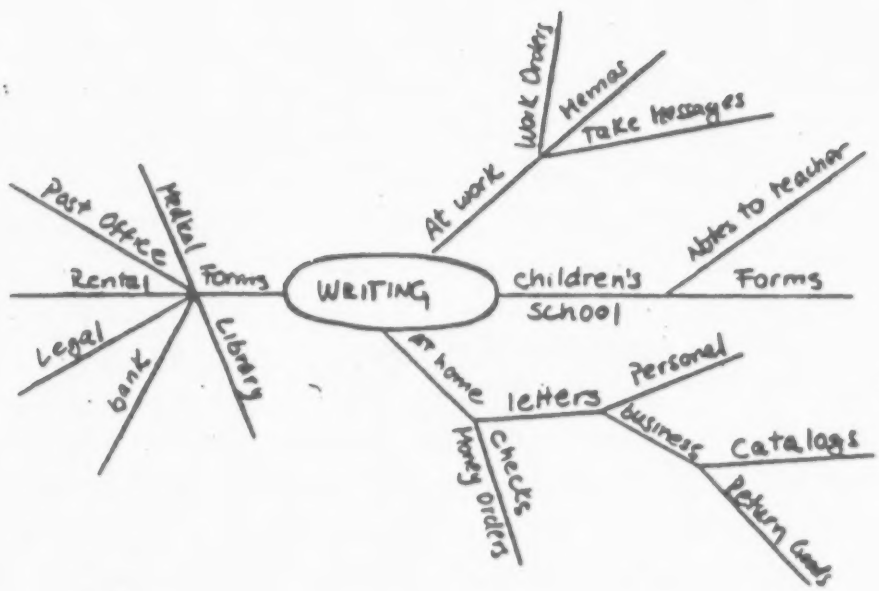
Mind mapping is a very versatile needs assessment tool. It can be used with beginning, intermediate, advanced, and multi-level classes and at various points throughout the instructional cycle.

Suggested Instructional Steps: Begin brainstorming with one question depicted at the center of a diagram. Learners' responses to central question and more detailed examples are added to the diagram as branches emerging from the center. To finish, a count is taken of those who agree with each response, and the tally is written on the branch. Instructional implications are discussed as a group.

EXAMPLE 1: TOPICAL



EXAMPLE 2: SKILL



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July, 2002

Valdes,
Here is a general outline of last month's training in Minneapolis. The training session was successful because of the attendees' active participation as well as the appropriateness and relevance of the materials presented. Greta's (with the rest of Eastside) organization and hospitality helped the participants feel at home and ready to work.

The objectives for the training were:

- Become familiar with best practices and resources in adult English as a Second Language
- Recognize the importance of assessment of learners' language abilities
- Learn how to better assist Senior Aides in setting realistic short-term and long-term goals
- Administer and score the BEST Oral Interview
- Administer and score the BEST Literacy Skills assessment
- Interpret BEST Scores

Throughout the training, we used interactive techniques that are appropriate in adult ESL classes. These included ice-breaking activities, interactive reading techniques, grouping strategies, pair work, and needs assessment and evaluation activities.

On the first day, we presented background material about adult English language learners, including *Tips for Teaching ESL to the Elderly* (Coalition of Limited English Elderly/Aguirre Institute, 2000) and *Elderly Refugees and Language Learning* (A.G. Grognet, 1997). We also spent considerable time helping participants understand the process and the importance of needs assessment for learners and programs.

Throughout both sessions we responded to questions about activities for working with and assessing elderly adult English language learners. We also provided information about appropriate print, Web, and software resources.

The second day focused specifically on the Basic English Skills Test (BEST). Participants learned about the history of the BEST, current issues in assessment of adult English language skills, and how to give the oral interview. Most of the day dealt with learning how to give and score the oral interview. The literacy skills assessment of the BEST was also introduced. It is a paper/pencil test and it is easily scored.

The participants had considerable time to practice, discuss issues with peers, and ask for clarification for the scoring. The group was told that a person has to give the oral interview at least 10 (probably more) times before he or she can be considered a proficient tester. I told the participants that I was available by phone or email for follow-up questions the BEST whenever the questions arose.

We were pleased with the enthusiasm and hard work and discussion that went on in this workshop. We will mail you a session folder, Valdes.

For a quick evaluation of the BEST training and the whole workshop, I asked participants what they were thinking, feeling, and taking away with them from the workshop. Following are participant evaluations and email comments.

Thinking:
Good thing—need more info.

I think it is a very valuable tool and I will be able to understand & communicate with ESL providers in the area to begin helping more people.

Seniors to learn the language

I think this is helpful to help my senior teacher. I feel I can use experiences I get from training to help my seniors…

I think I can deal more effectively with my clients who have language barriers.

Great to dialogue about BEST by/with other practitioners; will use it w/in my intake process; great to see where others are in this field

I realized how much I didn't know and how I will relate to learners in the future; appreciate opportunity to learn

I think that if we can train the ESL in using the BEST testing that it will be a great tool for our seniors.

The class is very interesting. I believe we all learn a lot.

Feeling:
More light at the end of the tunnel; good

I feel that I can relate to learners much better that the past.

Energized to use BEST and be a classroom instructor; happy to see how this "fits" with REEP; loved all the real examples and scenarios

I feel the training was very good idea.

I'm more aware how to assess the seniors when they begin in ESOL class.

I am extremely thankful to have been able to take part in this training.

Thanks for coming. This was a very informative session. Thanks again

The classroom dialogue for teaching ESL learners was helpful in understanding the needs of the learners.

I feel that the needs assessment and testing seminar for elderly ESL learners was very informative. I learned the necessity for English Skills Testing.

Happy

I feel very happy and satisfied that I have learned a wonderful tool to help.

I am learning with more knowledge that I did not have.

Taking away:
I can make our ESL stronger & better for our SA because of it.

How to assess Seniors in English language

An appreciation for the complexity of organizing and referring learn to the proper level; an understanding of what is involved.

I am taking many "small" ideas that will even be a help to my Senor AIDES meetings to have the AIDES interact w/ each other.

The suitcase is full with ideas.

Taking home a lot of information. Lynda you are great.

I am taking many things with me: note cards—the exercises

Resource of assessment for seniors

Presenters know their stuff!! Loved the "mixed" presentation style. Loved their enthusiasm and experience.

Take way to make good scoring with my students

ADDITIONALLY, WE RECEIVED THE FOLLOWING COMMENTS VIA EMAIL AFTER YOU SENT OUT A REQUEST FOR FEEDBACK ABOUT BEST:

Good Day,

The BEST Training was wonderful for the two staff I had attend that teach ESL. It gave me grand ideas on the placement of my non-English speaking Seniors. Miriam and Lynda presented some great ice breaking exercises that I will also use at my Senior AIDES Meetings, when mixing the English speaking and the non-English speaking Senior Aides. I took with me many ideas that are hands on and can be done now. Thanks Greta

Lynda & Miriam,
Thank you for a great learning experience! It was very motivational, and thanks to you, very interesting. Sorry, I was feeling so sick during this time; I actually got home and stayed in bed for two days. However, as mentioned prior, thanks to your teaching skills, the experience was very rewarding. Please, also thank Greta and the Eastside team for making us feel so "at home."
Raymond

Spring Institute for International Studies

E L T

Technical Assistance for
English Language Training Projects
1997-1998

Sponsored by the
Office of Refugee Resettlement

Elderly Refugees and Language Learning

By Allene Guss Grognet
Center for Applied Linguistics

ALL

Refugees coming to the U.S. from Southeast Asia, Europe, Africa, and the Middle East range from highly educated, multilingual former cabinet ministers to non-literate hilltribe people who practiced "slash and burn" agriculture. While the range of peoples is great, the singular event of fleeing from one's homeland with only the clothes on one's back, and moving halfway around the world to a country with a strange language and culture, is traumatic for refugees of any age. For elderly refugees it has been particularly difficult. At a time in their lives when they should be looking forward to respect and reverence, they find themselves transplanted in a culture which is focused on youth. They have lost their homes, probably many of their family members, and most of all, their honored status.

Refugees have many adjustments to make, among them a new language, new culture, and new expectations. Americans expect to work until they are about 65; Southeast Asians are more likely to consider their early fifties rather than their mid-sixties as the beginning of "old age", and refugees from Africa expect to work until they die or are too feeble. It is not expected that one would start learning new things in the elder years, but that is exactly what most refugees have to do.

A

What We Know About Language Learning and Age

There is no research evidence which suggests that older adults cannot succeed in learning another language. Older adults who remain healthy do not show a decline in their ability to learn. Then why does it seem easier for pre-pubescent children to acquire a language and to speak it without an accent? Researchers are not sure why this phenomenon occurs. One theory claims it is connected with cerebral elasticity. Another theory attributes it to developmental differences in the brain pre- and post-puberty; while another theory highlights the changes in self-perception and willingness to change one's identity that come with adolescence. Whatever the reason, more deliberate effort needs to go into language learning by adults than by children.

There are important aspects, though, where adults may have superior language learning capabilities. Researchers have shown that neural cells responsible for higher order linguistic processes, such as understanding semantic relationships and grammatical sensitivity, develop with age. In the areas of vocabulary and language structure, adults are better language learners than children. While children may be better at mimicry, older learners are more able to make higher order associations and generalizations, and can integrate new language inputs into already substantial learning and experiences. This is particularly true of adults with some formal education, who are used to framing new learning in terms of old learning. Instructional programs which capitalize on these strengths can succeed with older refugees.

B **Factors that Can Affect Language Learning**

Physical health is an important factor in learning at any age, and chronic disease may affect the ability of the elderly refugee to learn. Many have had little or no "professional" medical care throughout their lives, and suffer the residual effects of illnesses that went untreated. This may affect physical mobility, or the converse, the ability to sit for long periods of time. Like other elderly adults, refugees may be affected by hearing loss and vision problems. Their ability to understand oral English, especially in the presence of background noise, may be affected, and they may have difficulty deciphering written English displayed in small type, especially if their native language does not use a Roman alphabet.

The changes that have occurred in diet and climate sometimes affect refugees physically, and are most often seen in elderly refugees who have been in the U.S. three years or less. Finally, short term memory loss which often occurs with aging can adversely affect the older refugee's success.

Mental health is probably the single most decisive factor in refugee language learning. Depression is very common in general in old age, and for refugees it is often somaticized in such forms as loss of appetite, short attention span, nightmares, and inability to sleep. It is not surprising that refugee elders are depressed. They may have experienced war, disorder, uprooting, and in some cases the horrors of torture, rape, and the bloody death of loved ones. Refugees' depression does not permit them to concentrate well, thus reinforcing the cycle of not being able to speak English and deal with the demands of everyday life.

Social identity, or self re-creation, is also an important factor. A learner's ability to communicate successfully in some situations, and not in others, is mediated by the relationship of power between speakers. For instance, an educated man working in a fast food restaurant seemed more motivated by the need to support his family than by his identity as a language learner. Yet when told to clean up by teenaged co-workers, even though the teens had nothing to do, he ventured forth into English, positioning himself as a father. This gave him the power to get more equitable treatment in the conversation. But his inability to speak English well enough to talk on the telephone, or shop, gave
him a sense of ambivalence, and a feeling that he had lost his traditional role as the purveyor of values.

Cultural expectations, such as the role and place of the teacher, or how a language should be taught, also impinge on learning. Cultural beliefs, values, and patterns of a lifetime are not easily changed, even though new circumstances and surroundings may not support old ways. This cultural capital must be invested in new ways in order to obtain material goods, and to gain communicative competence as a speaker of a new language.

Attitude and motivation are key factors in any learning, but especially in language learning. The greatest obstacle to older adults learning a language is the doubt in the mind of the learner that older adults can learn a language. Unfortunately, this doubt is often shared by the language teacher as well. Another barrier is the fact that there is often no perceived need for older adults to learn English. Children, and especially grandchildren, become the negotiators in the new country. Though there may be loss of status in letting younger family members become one's voice, this is often preferable to attempting a learning task which is perceived as hopeless. Many refugee adults are reluctant to take the risks needed in language learning.

C Successful Strategies with the Older Language Learner

Teachers can encourage the older language learner by:

1. eliminating affective barriers;
2. incorporating adult learning strategies into their teaching;
3. making the learning situation and the learning materials relevant to the needs and desires of older refugees; and
4. tapping into the goals of the refugee community.

A discussion of these four strategies follows.

Eliminating affective barriers means first and foremost belief on the part of the teacher that older adult learners are not necessarily poor learners. This is key to reducing anxiety and building self-confidence in the learner. In mixed classes, where older language learners are mingled with younger ones, teachers need to arrange the class so that older learners get to speak on a topic in which they are interested and have knowledge. Teachers need to emphasize the positive, focus on the progress learners are making, and provide opportunities for them to be successful. Students must feel that they have learned something and participated every time they leave a classroom. Such successes can then be reinforced with more of the same.

Taking adult learning theory seriously can help build successes. Adult learning theory assumes that learning situations take into account the experiences of the learner, and provides the opportunity for new learning to be related to previous experiences. It also assumes that for the older adult, readiness to learn is decreasingly the product of biological development or academic pressure, and increasingly the product of the developmental tasks required in work and/or social roles. For the older refugee learner, the key here is developmental social roles. Finally, adult learning theory assumes that children have more of a subject-centered orientation to learning, whereas adults tend to have a problem-centered orientation to learning. This means that language learning should focus on problem solving strategies, whether that be using the telephone, sewing, shopping, or negotiating on the job.

By making the learning environment, the curriculum, and the teaching materials relevant to the refugee adult, what is taught is based on what older learners want and need to learn. Needs analyses of the target populations in a given community should be carried out, and of course, adult learners should be consulted about what they want to learn. For older refugee adults particularly, the learning situation needs to be viewed not only in terms of teaching a language, but in terms of the fulfillment of cultural and social needs as well.

The high drop-out rate of older refugees enrolled in many traditional adult education classes attests to the fact that older adults are not willing to tolerate what to them is boring or irrelevant content, or lessons that stress the learning of grammar rules out of context. When grammar and vocabulary are embedded in the situations refugees will encounter, they not only come to class, but they seem more willing to risk using their new language outside of the classroom. Refugees understand that they are learning English for the specific purposes they deem important, and they take it as a sign of respect when teachers acknowledge those purposes.

D

It is important that the learning environment acknowledge age. Presentation of new material should have both listening and viewing components to compensate for auditory or visual impairments, and there should be good lighting and the elimination of as much outside noise as possible. Activities which follow presentation should provide opportunities for learners to work together, focusing on understanding rather than producing language. On the other hand, class activities which include large amounts of oral repetition or fast-paced drills, extensive pronunciation correction, or competitive exercises will inhibit the older refugee's active participation.

Methodology should also acknowledge age. Learning strategies that rely more on long-term memory rather than short-term memory, ones that integrate new concepts and materials with already existing cognitive structures, tend to be best for older learners. Spiraling material is of great help with short-term memory, but learning by rote, which also relies on short-term memory, may not be successful even though many adult refugees believe that rote learning is the method of choice. Conversely, while many Africans and Asians may be reluctant to "role play", they may find that putting new words to familiar situations can be a satisfying experience. Lastly, learning entirely new concepts, such as those demanded by a computer or facts associated with citizenship training, may be beyond the capabilities of elderly refugees. A balance needs to be struck between the teacher's beliefs, the older refugee's beliefs, and what we know about the effect of learning on both long term and short term memory.

Language teachers also need to encourage older learners to rely on those learning strategies which have served them well in other contexts. By allowing different approaches to the learning task inside the classroom, teachers can help students discover how they learn best. A visual learner may need to write things down, even though the teacher might prefer that students concentrate on listening. Non-literate refugees might rely on auditory and memory cues, even though teachers tell them to write in their notebooks. By paying attention to learning channels, be they auditory, visual, kinesthetic or tactile, teachers will reduce frustration and help older learners to be comfortable in the learning situation.

Finally, by tapping into the goals of the refugee community, an essential bond is formed between the teacher and the older refugee. Language learning goals for older adults must mesh not only with individual goals, but with familial and community aspirations as well. For instance, refugee elders need to share and pass on their values, cultural practices, and religion to younger refugees. Older women need to pass on recipes and sewing techniques to younger women. And older men need to pass on the values and virtues of their culture, even though they may not be able to pass on their trades. The refugee community is very concerned with cultural preservation, and that is traditionally the job of the older generation, no matter where the refugees come from. Teachers might use these concerns to create language learning situations.

E

Glimpses of Some Success Stories

Language learning programs specifically for elderly refugees have been sparse. Those that incorporate more than just language learning seem to be the most successful. In Philadelphia, Project LEIF (Learning English Through Intergenerational Friendship) utilized college-age tutors to teach and learn from older Hmong refugees. Tutoring takes place in a community learning center as well as in the students' homes. In California, older Vietnamese refugees learned English as part of a training program for baby-sitters and day-care workers. These learners are now not afraid to answer the telephone or to initiate emergency calls. In the Washington, D.C. area, illiterate elderly Cambodian women learned English around a stove, a kitchen table, and a sewing machine. Among their new skills is the ability to

write their names and addresses, and to recognize warning signs on household products. In New York, older Russian refugees learned English through music and science. Their new skills include the ability to explain and demonstrate to non-Russian speakers what they did in Russia. And in Florida, videos of community activities helped older refugees access community services.

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Continuing Needs

A hopeful sign for more older language learner projects is the beginning of a dialog between the aging and refugee service organizations. There is much the two fields can learn from each other. Sharing what works is a first step, and developing effective demonstration projects which can then be adapted and replicated is another.

The identification and use of anti-depressive drugs is yet another step. Most refugees tend to shy away from the traditional "talking" approach of American psychotherapy. With medical research into depression for the elderly in general, the refugee has a choice which may be appealing to him. Modern seratonin uptake inhibiting drugs such as Prozac, Zoloft, or Paxil may help refugees in alleviating the depression, and giving them the energy and outlook that could be used for other things, such as language learning. However, these drugs have to be monitored, and refugees may be reluctant to go to a physician when there seems little reason to do so.

The situation is not as hopeful in the case of research into language learning for the older adult. Few studies have been conducted which investigate the specific characteristics of the older adult language learner. Research into the interaction of memory and age in language learning, as well as into identification of social identity and attitudinal characteristics, are also needed. We as teachers need to work on learning and teaching strategies for older adults and to identify appropriate motivational techniques. Such research would benefit not only the refugee elderly, but the American population in general, as the U.S. becomes a nation with a larger population of older adults.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

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Beginning to Work With Adult English Language Learners: Some Considerations

MaryAnn Cunningham Florez and Miriam Burt, National Center for ESL Literacy Education

In many parts of the United States, the number of nonnative adult learners seeking English language instruction is growing. States such as North Carolina, Arkansas, Georgia, Tennessee, Nebraska, and Iowa, not historically associated with immigrant influxes, have been experiencing increased growth rates with these populations in the last decade (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001). In 1998, 47% of the participants in federally funded adult education programs were there to learn English as a second language (ESL) (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, 1999). As immigrant populations seek English language instruction, the need for teachers to serve them is drawing people into the adult ESL teaching field. Some of these teachers have training and experience working with adults learning English. However, many are working with these learners for the first time.

What do teachers who are beginning to work with adult English language learners need to know? This Q&A discusses recommendations in four areas: application of principles of adult learning in ESL contexts, second language acquisition, culture and working with multicultural groups, and instructional approaches that support language development in adults. It is not intended to be comprehensive. Rather, it gives teachers an overview of important points, suggests basic strategies to use, and provides resources to consult for further information.

How do the principles of adult learning apply to adult English language learners?

Malcolm Knowles' (1973) principles of andragogy, the art and science of facilitating adult learning, are still seminal to many of today's theories about learning and instruction for adults.

> Adults are self-directed in their learning.
> Adults have reservoirs of experience that serve as resources as they learn.
> Adults are practical, problem-solving-oriented learners.
> Adults want their learning to be immediately applicable to their lives.
> Adults want to know why something needs to be learned.

In general, this picture of the practical, purposeful, self-directed learner is representative of adults, whether they are native or nonnative English speakers. All adult learners need adult-appropriate content, materials, and activities that speak to their needs and interests and allow them to demonstrate their knowledge and abilities.

So what is different for English language learners? Obviously, they need help with the language as they learn content. Teachers working with English language learners also need to think about how Knowles' adult learner characteristics are filtered through culture, language, and experience. For example, it is not uncommon to find nonnative learners who may be hesitant to take charge of their own learning. Their educational experiences in their countries may have taught them that the teacher is the unquestioned expert. They may be resistant to a learner-centered classroom where they are expected to develop goals and work in groups with other learners (Shank & Terrill, 1995).

Nonnative learners also may resist the lifeskill-oriented instruction that is common in many adult ESL programs. Coming from cultures where learning is a high-status, academic endeavor, they may expect a more academically oriented environment (Hardman, 1999). Because of this, teachers should explain to learners why they are learning what they are learning in this new way. Similarly, because many English language learners may have studied English grammar and are familiar with the terms describing language components, instructors should be prepared, when appropriate, to answer learners' questions about sentence structure and vocabulary.

What do instructors need to know about second language acquisition (SLA)?

Theories about how languages are learned can be complex. However, having some understanding of how people acquire and use languages can be useful to the teachers of adult English language learners.

Second language acquisition theories address cognitive issues (how the brain processes information in general and language in particular), affective issues (how emotions factor into second language processing and learning), and linguistic issues (how learners interact with and internalize

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new language systems). The following are some suggestions that instructors can use in the classroom. They are drawn from theories of second language acquisition generally accepted as relevant for most second language learners (summarized from Brown, 2001; Krashen, 1981).

- ***Meaningful interaction and natural communication in the target language are necessary for successful language acquisition.***

  Learners need to *use* the language, not simply talk about it. Give learners opportunities and purposes for communication that reflect or relate to their lives (e.g., role-playing a doctor/patient exchange or creating a chart with information on local medical services). Use authentic materials in activities whenever possible (e.g., listening for details in a recorded telephone message or reading classified ads from the local newspaper).

- ***Effective language use involves an automatic processing of language.***

  To become proficient, learners need to move from a concentrated focus on grammar, forms, and structures to using language as a tool to accomplish communication tasks. Think about the purpose of each lesson (e.g., is it important that the learner produce a specific grammar point or communicate an idea?) and interject error correction to serve those purposes. For example, if the activity is an oral substitution drill practicing the correct use of irregular past tense forms, it is appropriate to correct the verb form being used. However, if the focus of the lesson is making small talk on the job—a communication that involves use of irregular past tense verbs—correction may simply consist of a repetition of the correct form by the teacher (e.g., "I go to a movie last Saturday" is corrected by, "Oh, you went to a movie. What movie did you see?").

- ***Language learners can monitor their speech for correctness when they have time to focus their attention on form and know the language rules involved.***

  Give learners sufficient time for activities, to communicate, and to monitor their performance. Integrate lessons on grammar, structures, and language rules that are relevant to the communication task at hand (e.g., present lessons on imperatives when discussing giving directions) so that learners become familiar with correct structures. Focus activity objectives so that learners are not asked to process and monitor too many points at one time (e.g., asking learners to use new vocabulary and correctly use present and present progressive verb forms in an unfamiliar dialogue format can be overwhelming).

- ***Second language acquisition occurs when learners are exposed to language that is at and slightly above their level of comprehension.***

  In the materials you use and in your own speech, expose learners to language that is both at and slightly above what they can comfortably understand. Offer a balance of easier reading and listening activities with more challenging ones. Provide pictures, gestures, and prompts when learners are asked to use more complex language.

- ***People have affective filters (created by a variety of factors such as motivation, self-confidence, or anxiety) that can support or disrupt acquisition of a second language.***

  Create a classroom environment in which learners feel comfortable using and taking risks with English. Use activities that ask learners to work together or share information to build a sense of familiarity and community. Make sure the physical environment is as comfortable as possible. Avoid constant error correction and include activities that focus on overall ability to communicate meaning. Recycle topics or activities that motivate learners.

- ***There are "interlanguage" periods during which learners make systematic errors that are a natural part of language learning.***

  These may be similar to those of a child learning a first language (e.g., adding *ed* to signify all past tense verbs) or similar to patterns in a learner's native language (e.g., Spanish speakers placing adjectives after nouns, such as *shirt blue*). If errors appear to be normal and developmental, provide feedback and modeling of correct structures to support learners as they move through these steps. If an error persists, consider more structured practice on the point.

- ***There is a silent period during which learners are absorbing the new language prior to producing it.***

  The length of this period may vary for each learner. Allow learners time to adjust to the new language and begin to internalize its sounds and patterns. Use activities that allow them to demonstrate comprehension without having to produce language (e.g., say new vocabulary and ask learners to hold up picture cards that illustrate each word).

- ***Second language acquisition theories are based on research that investigates specific questions with specific populations in defined circumstances.***

  Some theories may be accepted as applicable across populations and contexts; the broad application of others

may be debatable. Evaluate how a theory may or may not relate to adult English language learners in general and to learners in your class specifically. Use second language acquisition theories to help make decisions about balancing different language learning activities; observe and respond to learner progress; and set realistic expectations of what learners can accomplish.

What do instructors need to know about culture and working with multicultural groups?

Culture and language are closely related. Learning a new language involves learning about (but not necessarily wholeheartedly embracing) new ways of thinking, feeling, and expressing. This process can put tremendous pressure on an adult who has a well-developed sense of self in the native language and culture. Because immigrants are, to varying degrees and not always consciously, re-configuring their views of themselves in relation to a new social context, they may at times be ambivalent, confused, or even hostile to the process of adapting to a new culture (Ullman, 1997). This includes language learning. Teachers can help ease this process in a variety of ways:

- Become acquainted with learners' cultures to better understand their perspectives and expectations both inside and outside the classroom (e.g., traditional literacy practices, gender roles, teacher and learner roles, historic interactions with other cultural groups, rhetorical patterns, religious beliefs and customs). Avoid generalizing and stereotyping learners. Acknowledge and respect differences. When discussing cultural differences and traditions in class, focus on descriptions rather than judgments.
- Learners may not be willing or able to participate in activities that involve discussion of taboo subjects, revelation of personal information, or reliving of painful experiences. For example, a refugee who lost family in a war may be very uncomfortable when a teacher asks learners to bring in pictures of their families for an activity. Be aware of the possible implications of activities or topics and offer learners options through which they can respond neutrally, such as bringing a photo of a family from a magazine instead of a personal photo.
- Remember that culture can play a role in all facets of language, including response time. Many English language learners will come from cultures where silence is not uncomfortable. When this factor is coupled with the reality of a slower processing time for listening comprehension in a second language, it suggests that waiting after asking a question (possibly as long as 10 seconds) before repeating or restating the question is advisable.

What instructional approaches support second language development in adults?

Adult English language learners come to ESL classes to master a tool that will help them satisfy other needs, wants, and goals. Therefore, they need to learn about the English language, to practice it, and to use it.

A variety of instructional approaches and techniques support language learning and language use (see Crandall & Peyton, 1993). Teachers need to examine these options and decide which approaches are most appropriate for them, their learners, and their settings. The following is a summary of general strategies to use with learners:

1) ***Get to know your students and their needs.*** English language learners' abilities, experiences, and expectations can affect learning. Get to know their backgrounds and goals as well as proficiency levels and skill needs.

2) ***Use visuals to support your instruction.*** English language learners need context in their learning process. Using gestures, expressions, pictures, and realia makes words and concepts concrete and connections more obvious and memorable. Encourage learners to do the same as they try to communicate meaning.

3) ***Model tasks before asking your learners to do them.*** Learners need to become familiar with vocabulary, conversational patterns, grammar structures, and even activity formats before producing them. Demonstrate a task before asking learners to respond.

4) ***Foster a safe classroom environment.*** Like many adult learners, some English language learners have had negative educational experiences. Many will be unfamiliar with classroom activities and with expectations common in the United States. Include time for activities that allow learners to get to know one another.

5) ***Watch both your teacher talk and your writing.*** Teacher talk refers to the directions, explanations, and general comments and conversations that a teacher may engage in within the classroom. Keep teacher talk simple and clear; use pictures, gestures, demonstrations, and facial expressions to reinforce messages whenever possible. Use print letters, with space between letters and words, and do not overload the chalkboard with too much or disorganized text.

Although it is important for the teacher to understand the structure of the English language, it may not always be appropriate to provide complex explanations of

vocabulary and grammar rules, especially to beginning-level learners. In other words, don't feel you have to explain everything at all times. At times it is enough for learners to know the response needed.

6) ***Use scaffolding techniques to support tasks.*** Build sequencing, structure, and support in learning activities. Ask learners to fill in words in a skeletal dialogue and then create a dialogue of a similar situation, or supply key vocabulary before asking learners to complete a form. Recycle vocabulary, structures, and concepts in the course of instruction. Build redundancy into the curriculum to help learners practice using learned vocabulary or skills in new situations or for different purposes.

7) ***Bring authentic materials to the classroom.*** Use materials like newspapers, signs, sale flyers, telephone books, and brochures in the classroom. These help learners connect what they are learning to the real world and familiarize them with the formats and information in such publications. However, do prepare learners beforehand (e.g., pre-teach vocabulary) and carefully structure lessons (e.g., select relevant, manageable chunks of the authentic material) to make this work.

8) ***Don't overload learners.*** Strike a balance in each activity between elements that are familiar and mastered and those that are new. Asking learners to use both new vocabulary and a new grammatical structure in a role-playing activity where they have to develop original dialogue may be too much for them to do successfully.

9) ***Balance variety and routine in your activities.*** Patterns and routines provide familiarity and security and support learners as they tackle new items. But English language learners, like all learners, have a variety of preferences for processing and learning information. They also can get bored. Give learners opportunities to experience and demonstrate their mastery of language in different ways. Challenge them with activities that speak to their lives, concerns, and goals as adults.

10) ***Celebrate success.*** Progress for language learners can be slow and incremental. Learners need to know that they are moving forward. Make sure expectations are realistic; create opportunities for success; set short-term as well as long-term goals; and help learners recognize and acknowledge their own progress.

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Needs Assessment for Adult ESL Learners

by Kathleen Santopietro Weddel, Colorado Department of Education
Carol Van Duzer, National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education

Assessment of literacy needs from the learner's perspective is an important part of an instructional program. Learners come to adult English as a second language (ESL) literacy programs for diverse reasons. Although they may say they just want to "learn English," they frequently have very specific learning goals and needs: for example, to be able to read to their children, to get a job, or to become a citizen. If their needs are not met, they are more likely to drop out than to voice their dissatisfaction (Grant & Shank, 1993). The needs assessment process can be used as the basis for developing curricula and classroom practice that are responsive to these needs.

Although learner needs assessment encompasses both what learners know and can do (learner proficiencies) and what they want to learn and be able to do, this digest focuses on ways to determine what learners want or believe they need to learn. Many of the activities described can also include or lead to assessment of proficiencies, and many of the sources cited include both types of assessment. (See Burt & Keenan, 1995, for a discussion of assessment of what learners know.)

What is Needs Assessment?

The word "assess" comes from the Latin term "assidere," which means to "sit beside." Process-minded and participatory-oriented adult educators "sit beside" learners to learn about their proficiencies and backgrounds, educational goals, and expected outcomes, immersing themselves in the lives and views of their students (Auerbach, 1994).

A needs assessment for use with adult learners of English is a tool that examines, from the perspective of the learner, what kinds of English, native language, and literacy skills the learner already believes he or she has; the literacy contexts in which the learner lives and works; what the learner wants and needs to know to function in those contexts; what the learner expects to gain from the instructional program; and what might need to be done in the native language or with the aid of an interpreter. The needs assessment focuses and builds on learners' accomplishments and abilities rather than deficits, allowing learners to articulate and display what they already know (Auerbach, 1994; Holt, 1994).

Needs assessment is a continual process and takes place throughout the instructional program (Burnaby, 1989; Savage, 1993), thus influencing student placement, materials selection, curriculum design, and teaching approaches (Wrigley & Guth, 1992). As Burnaby (1989) noted, "The curriculum content and learning experiences to take place in class should be negotiated between learners, teacher, and coordinator at the beginning of the project and renegotiated regularly during the project" (p. 20). At the beginning of the program, needs assessment might be used to determine appropriate program types and course content; during the program, it assures that learner and program goals are being met and allows for necessary program changes; at the end of the program, it can be used for assessing progress and planning future directions for the learners and the program.

Why is Needs Assessment Important?

A needs assessment serves a number of purposes:

- It aids administrators, teachers, and tutors with learner placement and in developing materials, curricula, skills assessments, teaching approaches, and teacher training.
- It assures a flexible, responsive curriculum rather than a fixed, linear curriculum determined ahead of time by instructors.
- It provides information to the instructor and learner about what the learner brings to the course (if done at the beginning), what has been accomplished (if done during the course), and what the learner wants and needs to know next.

Factors that contribute to learner attrition in adult literacy programs include inappropriate placement and instructional materials and approaches that are not relevant to learners' needs and lives (Brod, 1995). When learners know that educators understand and want to address their needs and interests, they are motivated to continue in a program and to learn.

Assessment Tools

Needs assessments with ESL learners, as well as with those in adult basic education programs, can take a variety of forms, including survey questionnaires, where learners check areas of interest or need, open-ended interviews, or informal performance observations. For needs assessment to be effective, tools and activities must be appropriate for the particular learner or group of learners. For example, reading texts in English might be translated into the learners' native language, read aloud by the teacher or an aide (in English or the native language), or represented pictorially. Types of needs assessment tools and activities include

Survey questionnaires. Many types of questionnaires have been designed to determine learners' literacy needs. Frequently they consist of a list of topics, skills, or language and literacy uses. The learners indicate what they already know or want to know by checking in the appropriate column or box, or they may be asked to use a scale to rank the importance of each item. For beginning learners who do not read English, pictures depicting different literacy contexts (such as using a telephone, buying groceries, driving a car, and using transportation) can be shown, and learners can mark the contexts that apply to them. For example, using transportation could be represented by pictures of a bus, a subway, and a taxi. The list of questionnaire items can be prepared ahead of time by the teacher or generated by the students themselves through class discussion.

Learner-compiled inventories of language and literacy use. A more open-ended way to get the same information that surveys offer is to have learners

keep lists of ways they use language and literacy and to update them periodically (McGrail & Schwartz, 1993).

Learner interviews. Interviews with learners, either one-on-one or in small groups, in their native language or in English, can provide valuable information about what learners know, what their interests are, and the ways they use or hope to use literacy.

Review of reading materials. An instructor can spread out a range of reading materials on the table (e.g., newspapers, magazines, children's books, comics, and greeting cards, and ask learners which they would like to read and whether they would like to work in class on any of them. A similar activity can be done with different types of writing.

Class discussions. Showing pictures of adults in various contexts, the teacher can ask, "What literacy skills does this person want to develop?" and have learners generate a list. The teacher then asks, "Why do you want to develop literacy skills?" Learners might be more willing to express their desires if they move from the impersonal to the personal in this way (Auerbach, 1994).

Personal or dialogue journals. Learners' journals—where they write freely about their activities, experiences, and plans—can be a rich source of information about their literacy needs (Peyton, 1993).

Timelines. Learners can prepare their own personal timelines, in writing or pictorially, that indicate major events in their lives as well as future goals. Discussion can then focus on how progress towards those goals can be met through the class (Santopietro, 1991).

Needs Assessment in One Adult ESL Program

The Arlington Education and Employment Program (REEP) in Arlington, Virginia periodically conducts a program-wide needs assessment to determine the interests and goals of ESL learners in the community. The director and program coordinators collaborate with community agencies, schools, and employers to identify ways in which the REEP program can prepare learners for the economic, civic, and family opportunities available in the community. This information is then used for program planning purposes, such as developing courses, curricula, and materials, and preparing needs assessment tools. Learner interviews and a placement test assessing general language proficiency are used to place learners in an instructional level. Once they are in the classroom, learners participate in a continual needs assessment process to plan what they want to learn and how they want to learn it.

In-class needs assessment is most successful when learners understand its purpose and are comfortable with each other. Because of this, the first curriculum unit in every new class is called "Getting Started" (Arlington Education and Employment Program, 1994). It enables learners to get to know one another through the needs assessment process as they acknowledge shared concerns and begin to build a community in the classroom (Van Duzer, 1995). For several days, some class time may be spent discussing where they use English, what they do with it, what problems they have encountered, and why they feel they need to improve their language skills and knowledge. Through this process, both the learners and the teacher become aware of the goals and needs represented in the class. A variety of level-appropriate techniques, like those mentioned above, are used to come to a concensus on the class instructional plan and to develop individual learning plans. Learners select from both program-established curricular units and from their identified needs. The needs assessment process serves as both a learning and information-gathering process as learners use critical thinking, negotiation, and problem-solving skills to reach this plan.

Once the class instructional plan is selected, ways are discussed to meet individual learner needs apart from the whole class such as through small in-class focus groups, working with a volunteer, time in the program's computer learning lab, assistance obtaining self-study materials, or referral to other programs. The class plan is revisited each time a unit is completed to remind the learners where they have been and where they are going and to enable the teacher to make changes or adjustments to content or instruction as new needs are uncovered.

Conclusion

Needs assessment can take many forms and can be carried out at different times during the instructional process. Whatever the focus and format, the basic purpose is to determine what learners want and need to learn. When curriculum content, materials, and teaching approaches match learners' perceived and actual needs, learner motivation and success are enhanced.

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Adult ESL Learner Assessment: Purposes and Tools

by Miriam Burt and Fran Keenan
National Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education (NCLE)

Learner assessment is conducted in adult basic education (ABE) and adult English as a second language (ESL) educational programs for many reasons—to place learners in appropriate instructional levels, to measure their ongoing progress, to qualify them to enroll in academic or job training programs, to verify program effectiveness, and to demonstrate learner gains in order to justify continued funding for a program. Because of this multiplicity of objectives, learner assessment involves using a variety of instruments and procedures to gather data on a regular basis to ensure that programs are "identifying learners' needs, documenting the learners' progress toward meeting their own goals, and ascertaining the extent to which the project objectives are being met" (Holt, 1994, p. 6).

This digest looks at learner assessment in adult ESL programs. It describes commercially available tests and alternative assessment tools, discusses key issues in assessment, and highlights some of the differences between assessment and evaluation.

Commercially Available Tests

In adult basic education, commercially available instruments such as the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) and the Adult Basic Learning Examination (ABLE) predominate as assessment tools because they have construct validity and scoring reliability, are easy to administer to groups, require minimal training on the part of the teacher, and are often stipulated by funding sources (Solórzano, 1994; Wrigley, 1992). ESL tests most commonly used in adult education programs are the Basic English Skills Test (BEST) and the CASAS ESL Appraisal (Sticht, 1990).

The BEST, originally developed by the Center for Applied Linguistics in 1982 to test newly arrived Southeast Asian refugees, assesses English literacy (reading and writing) skills and listening and speaking skills. Although this test measures language and literacy skills at the lowest levels (no speaking is necessary for some items as learners respond to pictures by pointing), it requires some training on the part of the tester. Also, the oral segment is lengthy and must be administered individually (Sticht, 1990).

The Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) of California has developed competencies, training manuals, and assessment tools for ABE and ESL programs. The CASAS ESL Appraisal is multiple choice and includes reading and listening items. It is easy to administer because it is given to groups, but does not test oral skills (Sticht, 1990).

Other tests used for ESL are the NYSPLACE Test, published by New York State, which is designed for placement and includes a basic English literacy screening and an oral assessment; the Basic Inventory of Natural Language (BINL) which provides a grammatical analysis of spoken language; the Henderson-Moriarty ESL Placement (HELP) test which was designed to measure the literacy skills (in the native language and in English) and the oral English proficiency of Southeast Asian refugee adults; and Literacy Volunteers of America's ESL Oral Assessment (ESLOA) which assesses a learner's ability to speak and understand English.

Limitations of Commercially Available Tests

The use of commercially available tests with adult learners is problematic because these tools may not adequately assess individual learner strengths and weaknesses especially at the lowest level of literacy skills. Such tests do not necessarily measure what has been learned in class, nor address learner goals (Lytle & Wolf, 1989; Wrigley, 1992).

Some testing issues are unique to ESL learners. It is not always clear whether ESL learners have trouble with selected test items because of difficulties with reading, with the vocabulary, or with the cultural notions underlying the test items (Wrigley & Guth, 1992). Another problem may be that some low-literate ESL learners are unfamiliar with classroom conventions such as test taking. Henderson and Moriarty, in their introduction to the HELP test, advise that ESL programs should evaluate whether learners possess the functional skills necessary for writing (such as holding a pencil), are familiar with classroom behaviors (such as responding to teacher questions), and are able to keep up with the pace of learning in beginning level classes (Wrigley and Guth, 1992).

Some would argue that the tests themselves are not the problem, but rather their inappropriate use, for example, administering a commercially available adult *literacy* test (assesses reading and writing skills) to measure English language *proficiency* (listening and speaking ability). Funding stipulations may specify inappropriate instruments (Solórzano, 1994) or even tests developed for native speakers (e.g., TABE, ABLE). Wilde (1994) suggests that programs maximize the benefits of commercially available, norm-referenced, and diagnostic tests by, (1) choosing tests that match the demographic and educational backgrounds of the learners; (2) interpreting scores carefully; (3) ensuring that test objectives match the program objectives and curricular content; and (4) using additional instruments to measure learner achievement.

Alternatives to Commercially Available Tests

Due in part to the drawbacks of the tests described above, many adult (and K-12) educators promote the use of alternative assessment tools that incorporate learner goals and relate more closely to instruction (Lytle & Wolfe, 1989). Alternative assessment (also known as classroom-based, authentic, or congruent assessment) includes such tools as surveys, interviews, checklists, observation measures, teacher-developed tests, learner self-assessment, portfolios and other performance samples, and performance-based tests (Balliro, 1993; Genesee, 1994; Isserlis, 1992; Wrigley, 1992.)

Alternative assessment allows for flexibility in gathering information about learners and measures what has been taught in class. *Learner portfolios*, collections of individual work, are common examples of alternative assessment. Portfolios can include such items as reports on books read, notes from learner/teacher

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interviews, learners' reflections on their progress, writing samples, data from performance-based assessments, *and* scores on commercially available tests (Fingeret, 1993; Wrigley, 1992). From *learner interviews*, administrators and instructors get information to help with placement decisions and to determine an individual's progress. In one survey of adult teachers, 80% reported using oral interviews to assess what students needed and what they were learning (Davis and Yap, 1992). From program-developed *performance-based tests*, instructors, administrators, and the learners themselves get information on how learners use English and basic skills regularly. These tests, in which items (such as reading a chart or locating information on a schedule) are put in actual contexts the learners might encounter (Alamprese & Kay, 1993; Holt, 1994), are common in workplace programs. Authentic materials such as job schedules, pay stubs, and union contracts provide the context in which literacy skills are assessed.

Alternative assessment procedures, however, are not a panacea. Maintaining portfolios is time consuming for both learners and teachers. The cultural expectations and educational backgrounds of ESL learners might make them especially resistant to the use of participatory and other alternative assessments (Wrigley & Guth, 1992). Furthermore, funders often require "hard data," and it is difficult to quantify outcomes without using commercially available tests. Finally, data from alternative assessment instruments may not meet eligibility requirements for job training programs, or higher level classes, or certification (Balliro, 1993; Lytle & Wolfe, 1989).

Because of these issues, ESL programs often use a combination of commercially available and program-developed assessment instruments to assess literacy and language proficiency (Guth & Wrigley, 1992; Wrigley, 1992).

Learner Assessment and Program Evaluation

Although learner progress, as measured both by commercially available and alternative assessment instruments, is an indicator of program effectiveness, it is not the only factor in evaluating ABE and adult ESL programs. Other quantifiable indicators include learner retention, learner promotion to higher levels of instruction, and learner transition to jobs or to other types of programs (e.g., moving from an adult ESL program to a vocational program, or to a for-credit ESL or academic program). Less quantifiable learner outcomes include heightened self-esteem and increased participation in community, school, and church events (Alamprese & Kay, 1993).

Other measures of adult education program effectiveness depend to a large extent on program goals. In family literacy programs, increased parental participation in children's learning, parents reading more frequently to their children, and the presence of more books in the home might indicate success (Holt, 1994). Workplace program outcomes might include promotion to higher level jobs, increased participation in work teams, and improved worker attitude that shows up in better job attendance and in a willingness to learn new skills (Alamprese & Kay, 1993).

Conclusion

Assessment is problematic for adult ESL educators searching for tools that will quantify learner gains and program success to funders, demonstrate improvement in English proficiency and literacy skills to learners, and clarify for the educators themselves what has been learned and what has not. Dissatisfaction with commercially available tools has been widespread, and many teachers have felt left out of the process of determining how to assess learner gains in a way that helps teaching *and* learning. Current practice and theory seem to recommend using a combination of commercially available and program-developed alternative assessment instruments. Further research in this area both by teachers and researchers is warranted.

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Elderly Refugees and Language Learning

By Allene Guss Grognet
Center for Applied Linguistics

ALL

Refugees coming to the U.S. from Southeast Asia, Europe, Africa, and the Middle East range from highly educated, multilingual former cabinet ministers to non-literate hilltribe people who practiced "slash and burn" agriculture. While the range of peoples is great, the singular event of fleeing from one's homeland with only the clothes on one's back, and moving halfway around the world to a country with a strange language and culture, is traumatic for refugees of any age. For elderly refugees it has been particularly difficult. At a time in their lives when they should be looking forward to respect and reverence, they find themselves transplanted in a culture which is focused on youth. They have lost their homes, probably many of their family members, and most of all, their honored status.

Refugees have many adjustments to make, among them a new language, new culture, and new expectations. Americans expect to work until they are about 65; Southeast Asians are more likely to consider their early fifties rather than their mid-sixties as the beginning of "old age", and refugees from Africa expect to work until they die or are too feeble. It is not expected that one would start learning new things in the elder years, but that is exactly what most refugees have to do.

A

What We Know About Language Learning and Age

There is no research evidence which suggests that older adults cannot succeed in learning another language. Older adults who remain healthy do not show a decline in their ability to learn. Then why does it seem easier for pre-pubescent children to acquire a language and to speak it without an accent? Researchers are not sure why this phenomenon occurs. One theory claims it is connected with cerebral elasticity. Another theory attributes it to developmental differences in the brain pre- and post-puberty; while another theory highlights the changes in self-perception and willingness to change one's identity that come with adolescence. Whatever the reason, more deliberate effort needs to go into language learning by adults than by children.

There are important aspects, though, where adults may have superior language learning capabilities. Researchers have shown that neural cells responsible for higher order linguistic processes, such as understanding semantic relationships and grammatical sensitivity, develop with age. In the areas of vocabulary and language structure, adults are better language learners than children. While children may be better at mimicry, older learners are more able to make higher order associations and generalizations, and can integrate new language inputs into already substantial learning and experiences. This is particularly true of adults with some formal education, who are used to framing new learning in terms of old learning. Instructional programs which capitalize on these strengths can succeed with older refugees.

B **Factors that Can Affect Language Learning**

Physical health is an important factor in learning at any age, and chronic disease may affect the ability of the elderly refugee to learn. Many have had little or no "professional" medical care throughout their lives, and suffer the residual effects of illnesses that went untreated. This may affect physical mobility, or the converse, the ability to sit for long periods of time. Like other elderly adults, refugees may be affected by hearing loss and vision problems. Their ability to understand oral English, especially in the presence of background noise, may be affected, and they may have difficulty deciphering written English displayed in small type, especially if their native language does not use a Roman alphabet.

The changes that have occurred in diet and climate sometimes affect refugees physically, and are most often seen in elderly refugees who have been in the U.S. three years or less. Finally, short term memory loss which often occurs with aging can adversely affect the older refugee's success.

Mental health is probably the single most decisive factor in refugee language learning. Depression is very common in general in old age, and for refugees it is often somaticized in such forms as loss of appetite, short attention span, nightmares, and inability to sleep. It is not surprising that refugee elders are depressed. They may have experienced war, disorder, uprooting, and in some cases the horrors of torture, rape, and the bloody death of loved ones. Refugees' depression does not permit them to concentrate well, thus reinforcing the cycle of not being able to speak English and deal with the demands of everyday life.

Social identity, or self re-creation, is also an important factor. A learner's ability to communicate successfully in some situations, and not in others, is mediated by the relationship of power between speakers. For instance, an educated man working in a fast food restaurant seemed more motivated by the need to support his family than by his identity as a language learner. Yet when told to clean up by teenaged co-workers, even though the teens had nothing to do, he ventured forth into English, positioning himself as a father. This gave him the power to get more equitable treatment in the conversation. But his inability to speak English well enough to talk on the telephone, or shop, gave
him a sense of ambivalence, and a feeling that he had lost his traditional role as the purveyor of values.

Cultural expectations, such as the role and place of the teacher, or how a language should be taught, also impinge on learning. Cultural beliefs, values, and patterns of a lifetime are not easily changed, even though new circumstances and surroundings may not support old ways. This cultural capital must be invested in new ways in order to obtain material goods, and to gain communicative competence as a speaker of a new language.

Attitude and motivation are key factors in any learning, but especially in language learning. The greatest obstacle to older adults learning a language is the doubt in the mind of the learner that older adults can learn a language. Unfortunately, this doubt is often shared by the language teacher as well. Another barrier is the fact that there is often no perceived need for older adults to learn English. Children, and especially grandchildren, become the negotiators in the new country. Though there may be loss of status in letting younger family members become one's voice, this is often preferable to attempting a learning task which is perceived as hopeless. Many refugee adults are reluctant to take the risks needed in language learning.

C **Successful Strategies with the Older Language Learner**

Teachers can encourage the older language learner by:

1. eliminating affective barriers;
2. incorporating adult learning strategies into their teaching;
3. making the learning situation and the learning materials relevant to the needs and desires of older refugees; and
4. tapping into the goals of the refugee community.

A discussion of these four strategies follows.

Eliminating affective barriers means first and foremost belief on the part of the teacher that older adult learners are not necessarily poor learners. This is key to reducing anxiety and building self-confidence in the learner. In mixed classes, where older language learners are mingled with younger ones, teachers need to arrange the class so that older learners get to speak on a topic in which they are interested and have knowledge. Teachers need to emphasize the positive, focus on the progress learners are making, and provide opportunities for them to be successful. Students must feel that they have learned something and participated every time they leave a classroom. Such successes can then be reinforced with more of the same.

Taking adult learning theory seriously can help build successes. Adult learning theory assumes that learning situations take into account the experiences of the learner, and provides the opportunity for new learning to be related to previous experiences. It also assumes that for the older adult, readiness to learn is decreasingly the product of biological development or academic pressure, and increasingly the product of the developmental tasks required in work and/or social roles. For the older refugee learner, the key here is developmental social roles. Finally, adult learning theory assumes that children have more of a subject-centered orientation to learning, whereas adults tend to have a problem-centered orientation to learning. This means that language learning should focus on problem solving strategies, whether that be using the telephone, sewing, shopping, or negotiating on the job.

By making the learning environment, the curriculum, and the teaching materials relevant to the refugee adult, what is taught is based on what older learners want and need to learn. Needs analyses of the target populations in a given community should be carried out, and of course, adult learners should be consulted about what they want to learn. For older refugee adults particularly, the learning situation needs to be viewed not only in terms of teaching a language, but in terms of the fulfillment of cultural and social needs as well.

The high drop-out rate of older refugees enrolled in many traditional adult education classes attests to the fact that older adults are not willing to tolerate what to them is boring or irrelevant content, or lessons that stress the learning of grammar rules out of context. When grammar and vocabulary are embedded in the situations refugees will encounter, they not only come to class, but they seem more willing to risk using their new language outside of the classroom. Refugees understand that they are learning English for the specific purposes they deem important, and they take it as a sign of respect when teachers acknowledge those purposes.

D

It is important that the learning environment acknowledge age. Presentation of new material should have both listening and viewing components to compensate for auditory or visual impairments, and there should be good lighting and the elimination of as much outside noise as possible. Activities which follow presentation should provide opportunities for learners to work together, focusing on understanding rather than producing language. On the other hand, class activities which include large amounts of oral repetition or fast-paced drills, extensive pronunciation correction, or competitive exercises will inhibit the older refugee's active participation.

Methodology should also acknowledge age. Learning strategies that rely more on long-term memory rather than short-term memory, ones that integrate new concepts and materials with already existing cognitive structures, tend to be best for older learners. Spiraling material is of great help with short-term memory, but learning by rote, which also relies on short-term memory, may not be successful even though many adult refugees believe that rote learning is the method of choice. Conversely, while many Africans and Asians may be reluctant to "role play", they may find that putting new words to familiar situations can be a satisfying experience. Lastly, learning entirely new concepts, such as those demanded by a computer or facts associated with citizenship training, may be beyond the capabilities of elderly refugees. A balance needs to be struck between the teacher's beliefs, the older refugee's beliefs, and what we know about the effect of learning on both long term and short term memory.

Language teachers also need to encourage older learners to rely on those learning strategies which have served them well in other contexts. By allowing different approaches to the learning task inside the classroom, teachers can help students discover how they learn best. A visual learner may need to write things down, even though the teacher might prefer that students concentrate on listening. Non-literate refugees might rely on auditory and memory cues, even though teachers tell them to write in their notebooks. By paying attention to learning channels, be they auditory, visual, kinesthetic or tactile, teachers will reduce frustration and help older learners to be comfortable in the learning situation.

Finally, by tapping into the goals of the refugee community, an essential bond is formed between the teacher and the older refugee. Language learning goals for older adults must mesh not only with individual goals, but with familial and community aspirations as well. For instance, refugee elders need to share and pass on their values, cultural practices, and religion to younger refugees. Older women need to pass on recipes and sewing techniques to younger women. And older men need to pass on the values and virtues of their culture, even though they may not be able to pass on their trades. The refugee community is very concerned with cultural preservation, and that is traditionally the job of the older generation, no matter where the refugees come from. Teachers might use these concerns to create language learning situations.

E

Glimpses of Some Success Stories

Language learning programs specifically for elderly refugees have been sparse. Those that incorporate more than just language learning seem to be the most successful. In Philadelphia, Project LEIF (Learning English Through Intergenerational Friendship) utilized college-age tutors to teach and learn from older Hmong refugees. Tutoring takes place in a community learning center as well as in the students' homes. In California, older Vietnamese refugees learned English as part of a training program for baby-sitters and day-care workers. These learners are now not afraid to answer the telephone or to initiate emergency calls. In the Washington, D.C. area, illiterate elderly Cambodian women learned English around a stove, a kitchen table, and a sewing machine. Among their new skills is the ability to

write their names and addresses, and to recognize warning signs on household products. In New York, older Russian refugees learned English through music and science. Their new skills include the ability to explain and demonstrate to non-Russian speakers what they did in Russia. And in Florida, videos of community activities helped older refugees access community services.

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Continuing Needs

A hopeful sign for more older language learner projects is the beginning of a dialog between the aging and refugee service organizations. There is much the two fields can learn from each other. Sharing what works is a first step, and developing effective demonstration projects which can then be adapted and replicated is another.

The identification and use of anti-depressive drugs is yet another step. Most refugees tend to shy away from the traditional "talking" approach of American psychotherapy. With medical research into depression for the elderly in general, the refugee has a choice which may be appealing to him. Modern seratonin uptake inhibiting drugs such as Prozac, Zoloft, or Paxil may help refugees in alleviating the depression, and giving them the energy and outlook that could be used for other things, such as language learning. However, these drugs have to be monitored, and refugees may be reluctant to go to a physician when there seems little reason to do so.

The situation is not as hopeful in the case of research into language learning for the older adult. Few studies have been conducted which investigate the specific characteristics of the older adult language learner. Research into the interaction of memory and age in language learning, as well as into identification of social identity and attitudinal characteristics, are also needed. We as teachers need to work on learning and teaching strategies for older adults and to identify appropriate motivational techniques. Such research would benefit not only the refugee elderly, but the American population in general, as the U.S. becomes a nation with a larger population of older adults.

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Jigsaw Activity

Elderly Refugees and Language Learning

By Allene Guss Grognet

A

1. In what ways do children have an easier time learning English? Why is this true?

2. In what ways do adults have the edge, perhaps, in language learning?

B.

1. What are six factors that can affect language learning with adults ?

2. Which of these factors does the author feel is most significant? Why?

Adult English Language Learners: Myths and Realities

Mark the following sentences as either true or false.

1. Adult English language learners are too old to learn another language well.

2. English language learners run the gamut from those who are not literate in their native language to those with post-graduate degrees from their home countries.

3. It takes two years for a foreign-born adult to learn English well.

4. The learning environment is very important for seniors; good lighting is desirable as is elimination of outside noise.

5. It is only necessary to assess learners at the beginning and at the end of a course of study.

6. Spiraling material in the classroom helps with short-term memory. However, learning by rote may not be successful, even though may seniors believe that drill and memorization is the way to learn a language.

7. It is necessary to correct every mistake the senior makes in grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary.

8. Adults can learn a language most efficiently in homogeneous settings where the teacher can translate everything into the native language.

9. Most seniors don't want to learn English.

10. In addition to assessing what the learner needs to know by talking to the host agencies to see what English is needed, teachers should also find out from the learners themselves what they need to use English for.

Miriam Burt and Lynda Terrill, NSCERC, Minneapolis, June 13, 2002

Spring Institute for International Studies

E L T

Technical Assistance for
English Language Training Projects
1997-1998

Sponsored by the
Office of Refugee Resettlement

Elderly Refugees and Language Learning

By Allene Guss Grognet
Center for Applied Linguistics

Refugees coming to the U.S. from Southeast Asia, Europe, Africa, and the Middle East range from highly educated, multilingual former cabinet ministers to non-literate hilltribe people who practiced "slash and burn" agriculture. While the range of peoples is great, the singular event of fleeing from one's homeland with only the clothes on one's back, and moving halfway around the world to a country with a strange language and culture, is traumatic for refugees of any age. For elderly refugees it has been particularly difficult. At a time in their lives when they should be looking forward to respect and reverence, they find themselves transplanted in a culture which is focused on youth. They have lost their homes, probably many of their family members, and most of all, their honored status.

Refugees have many adjustments to make, among them a new language, new culture, and new expectations. Americans expect to work until they are about 65; Southeast Asians are more likely to consider their early fifties rather than their mid-sixties as the beginning of "old age", and refugees from Africa expect to work until they die or are too feeble. It is not expected that one would start learning new things in the elder years, but that is exactly what most refugees have to do.

What We Know About Language Learning and Age

There is no research evidence which suggests that older adults cannot succeed in learning another language. Older adults who remain healthy do not show a decline in their ability to learn. Then why does it seem easier for pre-pubescent children to acquire a language and to speak it without an accent? Researchers are not sure why this phenomenon occurs. One theory claims it is connected with cerebral elasticity. Another theory attributes it to developmental differences in the brain pre- and post-puberty; while another theory highlights the changes in self-perception and willingness to change one's identity that come with adolescence. Whatever the reason, more deliberate effort needs to go into language learning by adults than by children.

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10 STEPS TO SUCCESS IN THE BRIGHT IDEAS CLASSROOM

But first: Get the classroom ready. Set up overhead projector; set up flip chart, board, write-on transparencies or something similar to write on. Set up chairs so you can use a variety of activities, including whole group, pairs, or small groups.

1. **"CHECK-IN" AND CONVERSATION:** Spend some time at the beginning of each class asking students open-ended questions that will relax them and get them talking and thinking in English. Give students a chance to say what they want to say with whatever language they have. Give them a few words here and there to help them along, but don't correct their pronunciation or grammar at this time.
   SAMPLE QUESTIONS: " What's new?" "What did you do yesterday?" "What about the weather--Do you think it will rain?" "Did you watch TV last night?"

2. **REVIEW WORDS AND PHRASES FROM PREVIOUS LESSONS:** Start each class with a review of what you taught the students in previous classes.
   SAMPLE: "Good morning. My name is _____. And you? What is your name?" "Would you like some juice or coffee?" "What did you have for breakfast?" "Would you like to go for a walk in the park?" "What do you buy in a pharmacy?"

3. **START EACH NEW LESSON WITH SOMETHING VISUAL:**
   Show a picture or object, or make a face or body action to illustrate what you're going to talk about. Discuss what the students will learn today and get their input on what interests them. Write on the board some key words from the lesson to get students ready.
   SAMPLE VISUALS: Pictures you took with your digital camera, pictures from magazines or newspapers, personal pictures, overheads from the BRIGHT IDEAS curriculum, fruit, medication bottle.

4. **KEEP STUDENTS MOVING AND HAVING FUN:** Direct students to do activities that make them move.
   SAMPLE ACTIVITIES: "Touch your nose," "Pick up your book," "Raise your right hand," "Walk down the hall to the second door on your right." Use songs to get students tapping their toes and snapping their fingers. Ask students to stand in a line and position themselves in order, such as from oldest to youngest, shortest to tallest, longest to shortest time in the U.S., etc. Bring in different foods and ask students to arrange them by price (they have to guess), or in alphabetical order.

5. **SHOW STUDENTS HOW ENGLISH WORKS:** Start a new lesson by introducing some of the key words and phrases, pronounce them clearly and ask students to repeat them after you. Use whole sentences or phrases, such as "The man is sick. He has an earache." Don't worry about grammar too much. Show students how patterns work instead of trying to explain grammar. Use role-plays, visuals, objects, and flashcards.

6. **GIVE EVERYONE MANY CHANCES TO TALK:** **Every** student should spend at least 10 minutes of every class hour talking in English.
The best way to make sure that happens is to put students in small groups or pairs, and give them tasks related to the lesson.
SAMPLE ASSIGNMENTS: "Say three things you ate yesterday." "Say what you do when you can't sleep." "Role play making an appointment with a doctor or clinic." Use a chart to help organize the conversation, but ask students to talk first and write things down later. Ask one person from each group to tell the whole class what they discussed. Repeat key phrases for the whole group.

7. **REINFORCE LEARNING THROUGH LISTENING:** Check to make sure students understand words or phrases by asking them to write down "TRUE" or "NOT TRUE" to statements you read to them. For example, "Donuts are good for you"; or "If you need medicine, you should go a pharmacy." Make 4 or 5 statements, and discuss the answers with the group.
Dictate vocabulary words or a few simple phrases to the group and ask them to write them down.

8. **HELP STUDENTS REMEMBER VOCABULARY WORDS:** Review some of the key words and phrases and ask students to write the ones they want to remember in their notebooks or on "flash" cards. If they use cards, they should write in English on one side and either put a picture or native language on the other side. Students can "test" themselves and each other with the flash cards

9. **TAKE YOUR LESSONS OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM:**
Get out of the classroom and walk around the neighborhood, visit stores and parks, and take regular field trips. Make it possible for your students to use English in "real life." Plan language activities for field trips. Do them in the classroom before the trip, during the trip, and afterwards
SAMPLE ACTIVITIES: Write down 10 things you see; copy 5 signs that you are not sure about; ask one person for directions to the nearest post office; ask one shop keeper when the store closes; take pictures with the digital camera and then explain why you took that picture.

10. **INVOLVE STUDENTS IN TAKING PICTURES AND TELLING STORIES ABOUT THEMSELVES:** We want students to eventually visit other Bright Ideas classes to share their stories. To prepare for sharing, have students interview each other about their country, their families, and their lives. Have students take pictures of each other and of the group inside and outside the classroom. Have students share the problems they are having with English. Set up role plays so they can act out situations and feel comfortable talking.

Assessing and Facilitating Progress in Senior Aides Learning English

Senior Aides within NSCERC face many challenges as they strive to reach and maintain dignified self-sufficiency. Immigrant Senior Aides often face the added challenge of needing to learn English and American work culture within a short time. For initial assessment and to quantify and qualify learner progress in English, programs may find the Best English Skills Test (BEST) a useful tool.

BEST was developed in the early 1980s by the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL), one of NSCERC's partners in the Senior Aide project. BEST includes an individually administered oral interview that measures communication skills and a literacy skills section that measures reading and writing. These tests are used by adult English-as-a-second-language (ESL) programs across the country.

Initial assessment and intake can help determine English class placement and point to appropriate directions for English language learning by answering the following questions:

> How much English does this person know? How well does he understand what he hears? How much can he say? Can he read and write in English? Can he read and write in his native language? How many years of education does he have in his native country?

The BEST can also help determine job placement for the Senior Aides and to predict when the Aide has learned English well enough to be successful in un-subsidized employment by answering these questions:

> What skills will the Aide need before she can be placed in a work environment? Should she be place in one where reading and writing in English (or the native language) are needed? Should she be placed in a job where she needs to use English?

To learn more about this process, come to Assessment and BEST Training at the Eastside Community Center in Minneapolis on Thursday, June 13, and Friday, June 14, 2002.

The agenda and objectives of the workshop are for NSCERC subcontractors are as follows:

Thursday, June 13, 1:00 – 5:00 p.m.

- **become familiar with best practices and resources in adult English as a Second Language**
- **recognize the importance of assessment of learners' language abilities**

Friday, June 14 , 9:00 – 4:00 p.m.

- **administer and score the BEST Oral Interview**
- **administer and score the BEST Literacy Skills assessment**
- **interpret BEST scores**

Who should attend?

English as a second language teachers, job counselors, program managers, and all persons interested in assessing Senior Aides' English ability and their progress in learning the language.

We hope to see you in Minneapolis next month!

Jigsaw Activity

Elderly Refugees and Language Learning

By Allene Guss Grognet

A

1. In what ways do children have an easier time learning English? Why is this true?

2. In what ways do adults have the edge, perhaps, in language learning?

B.

1. What are six factors that can affect language learning with adults ?

2. Which of these factors does the author feel is most significant? Why?

C

1. How can you make what is taught to the learner relevant and interesting to him or her?

2. How do children and adults differ in their orientation to learning? How can you make use of this information in the senior aides' classroom?

D

1. What are the difficulties with role-playing activities in the classroom? Why is this type of activity important?

2. Why should presentation of materials involve multiple modes (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, or tactile)?

E

1. What positive developments are occurring in the field of educaton for older adults?

2. What research is needed?

Appendix I

Minneapolis Senior AIDES Project

Initial Assessment

Name: _____ Soc. Sec. Number: _____ Date: _____

Home Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Do you have a driver's license? _____ Do you have regular use of a car? _____

How long have you been unemployed? _____

How did you hear about the Senior AIDES Project? _____

Education & Training: Highest grade completed: ___ HS Diploma: ____or GED: ___

College: Bachelor's Degree: _____Masters Degree: _____ other: _____

Licenses/Certificates: _____

Employment Skills: Please indicate which ones you are interested in or have developed:

Inter.	Dev.		Inter.	Dev.	
		Book Keeping			Leadership
		Health Care			Languages
		Prob. Solving			Teamwork
		Creative Arts			Reading
		Travel			Exercise Act.
		Cashier			Music
		Clerical			Pub. Speaking
		Computers			Supervising
		Rec./Telephone			Teaching
		Sales			Organizing
		Typing			Maintenance
		Building Trades			Fashion
		Care/Children			Food Service
		Care/Adults			Gardening
		Care/Animals			Coaching
		Customer Service			Fix Things

Individual Development Plan

Name: _____ Date: _____

Employment Goal: _____ Expected Entry Wage: _____

A. Additional training needed to accomplish your employment goal:
   1. On the assignment: _____
   2. Specific skills training: _____
   3. Job seeking and keeping skills: Resume, Interview_____

B. Supportive services needed to overcome barriers to reaching employment goal:
   1. Job Search Workshop 2. _____
   3. Resume 4. _____

Plan of Action to Achieve Your Employment Goal

Action Steps to be Taken	Person Responsible to Complete step Completed	Target Date to Complete	Date
Provide training assignment to increase employability			
Register with Employment Agency			
Develop an updated resume to include your Senior AIDES Project position			
Consider employment with temporary employment agencies			
Look for work off the project			

Estimated date for the achievement of your employment goal: _____

I have assisted in completing this Individual Development Plan, and I agree with the goals and actions listed in it. I am aware of my responsibility to continue to seek unsubsidized employment.

_____ _____
Senior Aide's Signature Date

_____ _____
Project Director's Signature Date

SENIOR AIDES PROJECT INTAKE FORM

A. IDENTIFICATION DATA 1. Type of Action: [ ] Original Enrollment [ ] Recertification [ ] Reenrollment

2. Name (Last/First/Middle Initial)

3. Social Security Number

4. Home Address (Number/Street/City/State/Zip)

5. Home Telephone ( )

B. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

6. Birth Date / /

7. Age

8. Family Size

9. Family Receiving Public Assistance? [ ] No [ ] SSI [ ] AFDC [ ] Other:

10. Annual Family Income $_____

Method Used:
[ ] 6 month
[ ] 12 month

Person/Source	Amount	Income Verification
	$_____	
	$_____	
	$_____	
	$_____	
	$_____	
	Total: $	

11. Verification of
Birth Date: _____
Residence: _____
Family Size:

12. Deduct $500? [ ] Yes [ ] No

13. At/Below Poverty? [ ] Yes [ ] No

14. In the past 12 months, formerly enrolled in this or other SCSEP Project? [ ] Yes [ ] No Total Hours:

15. The information provided is true to the best of my knowledge. I am aware that the information I have provided is subject to review and verification. I have provided required documents to support this application. I also am aware that I am subject to termination if I am ineligible after enrollment.

Applicant's Signature Interview Date / /

C. DISPOSITION

16. Eligible? [ ] Yes [ ] No

17. Determination Date / /

18. Entry Date / /

19. Interviewer's Signature

20. Title

D. PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

21. Sex
[ ] Male
[ ] Female

22. Education
Enter Highest Grade or Level Completed
[|]

23. Ethnic Group
[ ] White
[ ] Black
[ ] Hispanic
[ ] American Indian/ Alaskan Native
[ ] Asian/Pacific Islander

24. Limited English Speaking Ability? [ ] Yes [ ] No

25. Veteran? [ ] Yes [ ] No

26. Disabled? [ ] Yes [ ] No

27. Head of Household? [ ] Yes [ ] No

28. Person to Contact in Emergency Phone ( )

E. COMMUNITY SERVICE ASSIGNMENT 29. Code [|]

SERVICES TO GENERAL COMMUNITY

01 Education
02 Health and Hospitals
03 Housing/Home Rehabilitation
04 Employment Assistance
05 Recreation, Parks, Forests
06 Environmental Quality
07 Public Works/Transportation
08 Social Services
09 Other: _____

SERVICES TO ELDERLY COMMUNITY

11 Project Administration
12 Health and Home Care
13 Housing/Home Rehabilitation
14 Employment Assistance
15 Recreation/Senior Citizens
16 Nutrition Programs
17 Transportation
18 Outreach/Referral
19 Other: _____

30. Assignment Title

31. Host Agency

32. Primary Service Provided by Host Agency

F. PROJECT INFORMATION

33. Project Sponsor and City/State

34. Project Number

35. Signature of Person Reviewing Eligibility

36. Title

37. Date / /

[Put dates in Month/Day/Year format] **Make Sure Pink Copy is Legible** [PP-308/February 2001]

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

301 Senior Aide Status of Enrollment in Authorized Position

I, _____
(Name of Senior Aide)
understand that the Senior AIDES Project position for which I am enrolled is an authorized position which is expected to continue until the end of this funding period,

_____
(Date)

and may continue after that date if Federal funds are available. I understand, further, that this status is not related to any specific job to which I may be assigned from time to time. My signature attests to my acceptance of this status.

_____
(Signature of Senior Aide)

_____
(Date)

_____
(Signature of Project Director)

_____
(Date)

2001/2002 Payroll Schedule

Sponsor East Side Neighborhood Services
1700 2nd St NE
Mpls MN 55413

Project 119
Payroll Bi-Weekly

Please Note Time Sheets can not be processed if they are received after 11 a.m. on the due date.

From	To	Due by 11:00 a.m.		Pay Date
07/01/01	07/06/01	07/09/01		07/13/01
07/07/01	07/20/01	07/23/01		07/27/01
07/21/01	08/03/01	08/06/01		08/10/01
08/04/01	08/17/01	08/20/01		08/24/01
08/18/01	08/31/01	* 09/04/01	8:00 a.m.	09/07/01
09/01/01	09/14/01	09/17/01		09/21/01
09/15/01	09/28/01	10/01/01		10/05/01
09/29/01	10/12/01	10/15/01		10/19/01
10/13/01	10/26/01	10/29/01		11/02/01
10/27/01	11/09/01	11/12/01		11/16/01
11/10/01	11/23/01	11/26/01		11/30/01
11/24/01	12/07/01	12/10/01		12/14/01
12/08/01	12/21/01	* 12/26/01	8:00 a.m.	12/28/01
12/22/01	01/04/02	01/07/02		01/11/02
01/05/02	01/18/02	01/21/02		01/25/02
01/19/02	02/01/02	02/04/02		02/08/02
02/02/02	02/15/02	02/18/02		02/22/02
02/16/02	03/01/02	03/04/02		03/08/02
03/02/02	03/15/02	03/18/02		03/22/02
03/16/02	03/29/02	04/01/02		04/05/02
03/30/02	04/12/02	04/15/02		04/16/02
04/13/02	04/26/02	04/29/02		05/03/02
04/27/02	05/10/02	05/13/02		05/17/02
05/11/02	05/24/02	05/27/02		05/31/02
05/25/02	06/07/02	06/10/02		06/14/02
06/08/02	06/21/02	06/24/02		06/28/02
06/22/02	06/30/02	07/08/02		07/12/02

Holidays: FOUR (4) HOURS ARE PAID FOR A HOLIDAY

1) New Year's Day
2) Martin Luther Kings' Birthday
3) Memorial Day
4) Independence Day
5) Labor Day
6) Thanksgiving Day
7) Christmas Day
8) Personal Day

VACATION AND SICK LEAVE TIME

Senior Aides vacation and sick leave time is accrued at the rate of 0.0386 per hour paid.

* Time cards due at 8:00 am because of holiday

MEMORANDUM

TO: All ESNS Employees
SUBJECT: Direct Deposit of Payroll Checks

We are pleased to be able to offer you a new payday convenience--Direct Deposit. Now you can have your paycheck automatically deposited in your checking or savings account on payday. And you don't have to change your present banking relationship to take advantage of this service.

Direct Deposit will help you in many ways.
*it saves trips to your financial institution.
*it saves time in depositing checks--no long payday lines to wait in.
*it eliminates the possibility of lost, stolen or forged checks.
*your money is deposited faster--reduces the possibility of overdrafts.
*it means you get your money deposited to your account even if you're on vacation or away from the office on business or illness.

Here's how Direct Deposit works:
On payday you will receive an earnings statement showing gross salary, taxes, other deductions, and net pay. Your money will already have been deposited in your account. The amount of the deposit will appear on your bank statement.

We believe you will like the added convenience of having your net pay automatically deposited for you. Direct Deposit is safe, convenient and easy. To take advantage of this service, complete the attached authorization form and return it to the Payroll Department.

The authorization form, which is provided below gives East Side Neighborhood Service and your financial institution authority to deposit your pay to your account.

Simply complete the form in order to take advantage of Direct Deposit.

All you need do is:
1. Mark the box before type of account to indicate whether your pay will be deposited your checking or savings account.
2. Fill in your name, financial institution name and location, and date.
3. Attach a voided check for verification of all financial institution information. If you are unable to attach the voided check, please fill in your account number.

NOTE:Be sure to sign the form!

EMPLOYEE'S AUTHORIZATION -- Please fill out and return to the Payroll Department.

STAPLE VOIDED CHECK HERE

I authorize you and the financial institution listed below to initiate electronic credit entries, and if necessary, debit entries and adjustments for any credit entries in error to my:

☐ checking account ☐ savings account

each payday. This authority will remain in effect until I have cancelled it in writing.

Date

FINANCIAL INSTITUTION

NAME (PLEASE PRINT)

BRANCH

ACCOUNT NUMBER AT FINANCIAL INSTITUTION

CITY STATE

SIGNATURE

TRANSIT ROUTING NUMBER

ACCOUNT NUMBER INFORMATION

ABA

ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTION

JOB TITLE: **TEL.**_____

HOST AGENCY:

JOB LOCATION:

SUPERVISOR'S NAME:

TITLE:

HOST AGENCY MISSION:

DAYS WORKED:

HOURS WORKED:

DUTIES/RESPONSIBILITIES:

CRITERIA FOR SELECTION:

TRAINING:

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY:

NAME:

WAGE:

ASSIGNED DATE:

406 Record of Senior Aide Orientation

My signature here is acknowledgment that I have had fully explained to my satisfaction the following matters concerning my employment as a Senior Aide.

Goals of the NCSERC Senior AIDES Project	
Goals of the Senior AIDES Project and East Side Neighborhood Service, Inc.	
Hours of work	
Wage rate	
Schedule and method of payment of wages	
Timesheet	
Annual leave and paid holiday	
Funeral and Jury duty benefit	
Procedures for reporting job related accidents	
Procedures for complaint resolutions	
Senior Aides meetings	
Durational limit on job assignment	
Available training	
Causes for termination	
My obligation to seek unsubsidized employment, including the host agency to which I am assigned	
Allowable and unallowable political activities	
Obligation to report any significant changes in my conditions of eligibility	
No tolerance work place policy	

Further, I have been given a copy of the Senior AIDES Project personnel policies and a copy of my job description.

_____ _____

Signature of Senior Aide Date

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

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